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Noir / Blanc: Representations of Colonialism and Cosmopolitanism in Eighteenth
Century Painting

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor
of Philosophy

in

Art History, Theory, and Criticism

by

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Professor Norman Bryson, Chair

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2013

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2013

DEDICATION

For Robert and Vernal Kehm who were always there for me.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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by

Matthew W. Jarvis

Doctor of Philosophy in Art History, Theory, and Criticism

University of California, San Diego, 2013

Professor Norman Bryson, Chair

Anne Louis Girodet showed his portrait of Belley at the Salon of 1798 during the height of the Directory government. *Belley* represented a history of where France had been and where it was at the time. When we look upon Girodet's painting we are compelled to reflect upon the sacrifices of three revolutions as well as the slave trade itself. Girodet absorbs and re-articulates an entire epistemology of the black figure in anglo as well as French painting. *Belley* accounts for a great deal of aesthetic shifts in fashion as well English effects on French artistic practices. Girodet presents not only a

challenge to history painting but academic practices with regards to the body. What we see in *Belley* is a new France where a black man, former slave, can rise to be a French aristocrat. At the same time that *Belley* was being painted a young military officer from Corsica was starting to make a name for himself in France. Napoleon Bonaparte would have a meteoric rise to height that no one in the modern world has since surpassed. Ever present in his mind and manner, though, were his roots on the tiny island possession that had been conquered by France just before his birth. Through painting and controlled artistic propaganda we see Napoleon emerge as a figure who articulates the northern and southern extremes of his empire in addition to the historical lineage he attempts to lay claim to. Ingres' 1806 of *Napoleon Enthroned*, later to be re-imagined by Andrea Appiani, is the concluding presentation of a body that has left the Mediterranean world and scaled the heights of Valhalla as well as absorbed the presentation of the ancient caesars. Like Belley, Napoleon is born into colonialism. Both men, however, break their chains. Each is ascendent and in representation shows a worldliness that few at the time possessed. Belley was capable of moving beyond the Atlantic and the West Indies to become a cosmopolitan man. So too was Napoleon a man of the world, however, in his case, it was a world which he controlled.

Noir

“*Inde irae*”¹

Have they not hung up men with heads downward, drowned them in sacks, crucified them on planks, buried them alive, crushed them in mortars? Have they not forced them to eat shit? And, after having flayed them with the lash, have they not cast them alive to be devoured by worms, or onto anthills, or lashed them to stakes in the swamp to be devoured by mosquitoes? Have they not thrown them into boiling caldrons of cane syrup? Have they not put men and women inside barrels studded with spikes and rolled them down mountainsides into the abyss? Have they not consigned these miserable blacks to man-eating dogs until the latter, sated by human flesh, left the mangled victims to be finished off with bayonet and poniard?²

Leaning casually as though the passing breeze were his only concern stands Jean-Baptiste Belley. The ease of his stance makes Belley seem at home and, yet, a background wilderness of lush green mountains that dissipate into a milky horizon of marsh, sea, and cloud clearly belongs to some vague island or distant land which does not match his sophisticated clothing and graceful air. While Belley’s gaze does not meet our own – indeed he appears coolly indifferent to the viewer – the philosopher Raynal sternly blocks our immediate entrance into the world of Girodet’s 1796 painting. The bust of Raynal and the virtually full bodied figure of Belley dominate the right side of the canvas so monolithically as to almost entirely obscure the background. The tiny slice of St. Domingue reveals itself as if a curtain were pulled back slightly: giving us a fleeting view of what appears to be Eden, an unspoiled paradise. However, the authority of Raynal and

¹ Hence the resentment.

² Vastey, as quoted in Robert Debs Heintz Jr. and Nancy Gordon Heintz, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492-1971*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978. pp. 26-27.

Belley warns that this is no paradise. Instead, there is much to understand before coming to this part of the world.

Girodet's *Portrait of Citizen Belley, Ex-Representative of the Colonies* displays a man of the world. Belley is no longer integrated into one system of place. Standing in St. Domingue with the self-comportment and attire of a Frenchman, *Belley* begs we viewers to linger for a long time upon a deeply coded work. Belley is a freeman, yet he reflects slavery. His body in proximity to the bust of Raynal reminds us that there is a history present in this painting. Indeed, there is as much of the histories of France, England, and the United States of America in Girodet's painting as there is the histories St. Domingue and Africa. To examine Girodet's portrait properly we must go back to a time when pirates and anarchy ruled the West Indies. Warring countries will struggle for dominion of small parcels of land whose contents will prove extraordinary in value. Men and women will be displaced from their homelands. Cruelty and inhuman acts will befall many as war at home and abroad surges across the West. Until finally, at the conclusion of the eighteenth century, an elusive peace before the greater storm emerges. And it is in this brief moment where we find Belley calm and serene and leaning.

In part one I will explore the history of slavery and race in the French colony of St. Domingue. From there I will move into a more general discussion of slaves in Western art from the eighteenth century using works from America, France, and England. We will see how artists' proximity affected the representation of the slave or other. Next, I will move into a more specific discussion of the assimilated other lingering upon two works by John Singleton Copley: *Watson and the Shark* and *The Death of Major Pierson*.

These two paintings will form the background for understanding the role of servant versus slave as well as master / slave dialectics in painting. Continuing the evolution will be black portraits. I will take into account Lavater's physiognomies and their presence or absence in terms of representing the black face. Finally, Girodet's *Belley* will conclude the study of *noir* by implying and reconciling epistemological aesthetics within the portrait and revealing the nature of the assimilated, cosmopolitan man.

First, though, we must understand the history of St. Domingue. In June 1633, Louis XIII made dispensation for slavery in St. Domingue. His supposed purpose was to christianize the souls of blacks living in the French portion of the colony. Most who became slaves in St. Domingue at that time were refugees who had attempted to escape Spanish masters only to be recaptured by French planters. It would take thirty years before the fullness of slavery could be seen in St. Domingue. The *Compagnie des Indes Occidentales* began transporting slaves to the French West Indies from the Gold Coast, the Slave Coast, the Congo region, and Angola. For its part the original French outpost was, more or less, a lawless haven for freebooters or *filbustier*. Minor skirmishes occurred between Spanish and French privateers until 1659 when Louis XIV formally established Tortuga as a permanent French settlement and western Hispaniola became St. Domingue.³

Ten years prior, in 1649, a man with great social ambition and clandestine means became the councillor of state in France. Jean-Baptiste Colbert enjoyed a meteoric rise to

³ Prior to 1659 Tortuga's ownership was controlled at various times by the French, Dutch, and the English and, in 1638, the Spanish had destroyed the settlement altogether massacring all who lived there, literally turning the town into a human abattoir as a warning to others who might come and try to rebuild the colony.

power. At just nineteen years old he held a post in the war office as personal secretary to Michel le Tellier.⁴ Opportunity abounded for an astute young man who could navigate the turbulent politics of mid-seventeenth century Paris. Colbert rose to be Superintendent of buildings in 1664, Controller-General of Finances in 1665, and Secretary of the Navy in 1669. The latter position would afford Colbert control over almost every aspect of French politics except the ability to declare war as he would hold all of his acquired offices simultaneously rather than surrendering the former as he was promoted ever upward.

Chartered in 1664, the French West India Company would be the most lucrative resource at Colbert's disposal. St. Domingue would be the settlement where so many resources could be created, plundered, and destroyed. Colbert appointed Bertrand d'Ogeron de la Bouère, a former marine officer and *boucanier* to govern a society of dregs. His settlers were former pirates, his trading partners were the Dutch and Spanish and, thus, enemies of the crown, and, when the colony was in need of women:

Combing French jails for whores and pickpockets, breveted "female orphans," Ogeron obtained a hundred women settlers. First pick among this shopworn cargo went to men who could raise bond to liquidate expenses of the transaction. Couples were then united when the husband vowed: "I take thee without knowing, or caring to know, who thou art [...]. Give me only thy word for the future. I acquit thee of what is past." Then, striking his musket butt, he added, "If thou shouldst prove false, this will certainly be true to my aim."⁵

Over the next thirty years St. Domingue expanded but not without some growing pains.

As Ogeron himself wrote, "I have anticipated every need. I have had to govern fierce

⁴ It should be noted that part of Colbert's early rise was most likely related to family marriage.

⁵ Heinl, 18.

people who had never known any yoke and I have governed them so readily that they have attempted only two small seditions.”⁶ Ogeron governed until 1675 and vastly increased trade and cash crop production in the region: namely cocoa and tobacco. St. Domingue would continue to thrive as a veritable export mecca with the inclusion of cane sugar and indigo plantations in 1686.

Piracy remained a problem in the region, however, and governor after governor wrote to Versailles begging for help – help that would not come. By 1689, Louis XIV had a larger problem on his hands. England, Spain, the Holy Roman Empire, Austria, Bavaria, Brandenburg, the Dutch Republic, Ireland, the Palatinate of the Rhine, Portugal, Savoy, Saxony, and Sweden had formed the Grand Alliance in an effort to quell French expansionism into the Palatinate. St. Domingue was not spared violence as British and Spanish troops raided and looted plantations. Jean-Baptiste du Casse was now appointed by Louis to rule over the colony which had fallen into complete anarchy. And, in order to solve the more domestic problem of piracy, “When most of Europe went to war against Louis XIV in the 1680s and 1690s, French governors awarded naval commissions to Caribbean pirate captains.”⁷ Pirates, volunteers, soldiers, and for the first time an organized regiment of black pioneers laid siege to Cartagena in a decisive French victory.⁸ A further French victory came when 30,000 French troops, now with Italian

⁶ Id at 19.

⁷ John Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue*, New York: Palgrave, 2006. pp. 25.

⁸ Heinl writes that the spoils included, “7,646,948 francs’ worth of bullion, 1051 pounds of cut emeralds, 71 amethysts, a huge coffer of sacramental vessels and other ecclesiastic silver, and a solid silver Madonna garbed in a robe of precious stones.” pp. 23

support, captured Barcelona.⁹ On September 20, 1697 peace was reached with the Grand Alliance with the Treaty of Ryswick.¹⁰ As part of the elaborate peace negotiations most territories that had been gained by each of the countries during the Nine Years' War were surrendered back to traditional holdings. However, France insisted on an absolute claim to St. Domingue. Spain agreed.

After the fighting had died down those whose resumes had previously included piracy and naval mercenary now found new profit in settling plantations given by land grants through the *Compagnie de St. Louis*: a new company setup with the responsibility of colonizing the former Spanish third of Hispaniola. Those who had become wealthy through piracy, became richer through naval exploits and, now, became decadent as plantation masters, "Every one forgets who he was when he came to the island, and I could name a number of men who came out as indentured servants and were sold to buccaneers, but who are now such great land lords that they cannot walk a step but must always ride in their carriage and six horses."¹¹ Dubois notes, "The number of plantations in Saint-Domingue increased with startling rapidity [...] From 1700 to 1704 they jumped from 18 to 120."¹² Such large plantations and luxurious lifestyles naturally required an

⁹ Numbers of French troops vary between 25,000 and 32,000. The French were led by Vendôme and the garrison in Barcelona was under the command of Prince George of Hesse-Darmstadt. Casualties on the French side totaled 9,000 and 12,000 on the Spanish side. See: John Childs, *The Nine Years' War and the British Army*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991. John Lynn, *The Wars of Louis XIV 1667-1714*, Essex: Longman, 1988.

¹⁰ The treaty is named after the go between town as the French were based in The Hague whereas the Grand Alliance was based in Delft. Peace negotiations took place in Rijswijk at the Huis ter Nieuwburg.

¹¹ Jean-Baptiste Labat, *The Memoirs of Père Labat 1693-1705*, trans. John Eaden, London: Frank Cass, 1970. pp. 165-167.

¹² Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2005. pp. 19.

equally sizable labor force. In the 1680s one in three people on St. Domingue was a slave, by 1713 the slave population accounted for eighty percent of those living on St. Domingue.¹³

Prior to the Nine Years' War, Louis XIV had had the foresight to understand that management of, as well as laws for, the slave populace, even at the levels of a few thousand, would be needed. In March of 1685 the king issued the *Edit Touchant la Police des Isles de l'Amérique Française* or, more colloquially, the *Code Noir*. The *Code Noir* continued the objective of instilling Catholicism within the slave population: there was even the position of slave chaplain who would marry slaves to one another, conduct baptisms, hold services, and Sunday Mass.¹⁴ Furthermore, the code laid out the responsibilities of the masters: essentially to clothe, feed, and house slaves. But theory was strongly juxtaposed with reality in St. Domingue. As seen in the quote at the beginning of this section a master could inflict violent and sadistic punishments on his slaves; yet, the *Code Noir* states, "The masters may also, when they believe that their slaves so deserve, chain them and have them beaten with rods or straps. They shall be forbidden however from torturing them or mutilating any limb."¹⁵ The Code further provides for instances of capital punishment such as, "The slave who has struck his master in the face or has drawn blood, or has similarly struck the wife of his master, his

¹³ Garrigus, 29-30.

¹⁴ Louis Sala-Molins, *Le Code Noir, ou le calvaire de Canaan*, Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 1988. Articles two through eight deal with the relationship of Catholicism to slavery; notably the code states that the slaver owner himself must be Catholic.

¹⁵ Article 42 of the Code Noir.

mistress, or their children, shall be punished by death.”¹⁶ Beyond basic needs the final articles of the Code Noir provided for provisions for the emancipation of slaves or *affranchissement* if a master was so inclined.¹⁷ Article LIX provides the most extraordinary language of the code and indicates, to no small degree, progressive thought on the part of Louis XIV, “We grant to freed slaves the same rights, privileges and immunities that are enjoyed by freeborn persons. We desire that they are deserving of this acquired freedom, and that this freedom gives them, as much for their person as for their property, the same happiness that natural liberty has on our other subjects.” What is most notable is, as Garrigus points out, “the French crown defined slavery as a legal, not a racial, condition.”¹⁸

Race would become a complex and ongoing problem as the in absence of European women. Earlier in St. Domingue, Ogeron had solved this problem by importing the hoi polloi of France as the *filles à cassette* were reluctant enough to go to New Orleans let alone an island of pirates. But now an easier solution was available. Heintz writes:

Although the Code Noir prohibited sexual relations between Europeans and slaves, it could not stop white planters from wenching with African maids, and in due course there came into being a new class, “*sang-mêlé*” or, in later usage, *mulâtres*. This class benefited most often from *affranchissement*, so, as years passed, an intermediate stratum of mixed-blood *affranchis* developed between the French colonists and their African slaves. The grievances of the *affranchis*, who hated their fathers

¹⁶ Article 33 of the Code Noir.

¹⁷ A freed slave was known as an *affranchi*. Other slaves sought freedom by running away, usually into the mountains and became known as *maroons*; coming from *marronage*.

¹⁸ Garrigus, 41.

and despised their mothers, and the abuse of their rights by the whites, were to fuel the conflagration that was to come.¹⁹

Though most sexual encounters between slaves and masters were rapes, in some cases, actual relationships formed which resulted in a type of common law marriages known as *plaçage*. And, in St. Domingue, a culture grew where ex-slaves rose in stature and, in some regards, political and social power. Indeed, St. Domingue stood apart from other colonies as being far less rigid in following the Code Noir and other proclamations from Versailles. As is generally the case when the money is pouring in leaders have a tendency to look the other way rather nitpick social behavior.

The Creole society of St. Domingue proved to be a gentrifying sect of the populace.²⁰ White men who had taken black women as wives and produced mulatto or *métis* daughters; these young women proved to be some of the most notable and sought after for familial unions in St. Domingue; often great fortunes were at stake. A notable example is Marie Casamajor, daughter of Pierre Casamajor, a free man of color, and her marriage to Thomas Ploy a creole: his mother had been a free woman of color and his father Dutch. This union almost anywhere else in the world would have been unthinkable but in St. Domingue, by the middle of the eighteenth century, such social positions were possible and even preferred.

Social struggle emerged not simply on the lines of white overlords importing tremendous amounts of slaves to be worked to death on plantations, “Generally, five to

¹⁹ Heintz, 26.

²⁰ Creole is not a racial term but, rather, one that implies location of birth.

ten percent of the Dominguan plantation slaves died every year.”²¹ Life on the island could be extremely harsh or, if you were amongst the rich, decadent. And, it was not the white Frenchmen who were per se the ones succeeding in St. Domingue; instead, the creoles, the mulattos, and the *gens de couleur libres* were having a fair amount of success and, as such, creating an atmosphere of discontent not only on the island but in France as well. The phrase “rich as a Creole” was not an uncommon phrase in Paris:

[T]his veneer of prosperity and productivity was thin and brittle. Absentee landlordism had become rife. By 1752, of thirty-nine sugar plantations [...] only ten were administered by resident owners; the rest were run by stewards [...] whose Loire châteaux and Paris town houses had been built on chocolate, indigo, coffee, and cotton. Planters in St. Domingue almost universally looked to the day when they could return to France and live off their wealth. Amid its supposed glitter, colonial life could be stifling: in the words of [...] Baron de Wimpffen, ‘Nothing resembles a state of wretchedness so much as their opulence.’ At the pinnacle of an immense pyramid of misery and bondage some 30,000 whites looked down on 25,000 *affranchis* and more than 700,000 slaves.²²

The *grands blancs* were the rich whites of the colony of whom Baron de Wimpffen complains. Though, certain mulatto families – the Laportes and the Baugés of Galets, the Croix des Bouquets – possessed wealth which paralleled if not surpassed that of any of the *grands blancs*. The *grands blancs* remained most conspicuous within the colony. These were the men who had originally founded the plantations; some were only one generation removed from pirates: greed and profit was in their blood. Still others had descended from French colonists who had begun small farms and, usually through successful if dangerous speculation, turned their massive profits into great plantations.

²¹ Garrigus, 54. The average life expectancy for a slave was eight years.

²² Heintz, 32-33.

In a 1764 letter to Versailles, Governor d'Estaing wrote, "Ici l'on ne rougit de rien, excepté de ne pas gagner de l'argent, à n'importe quel prix."²³ This statement by d'Estaing underscores the degeneracy of the rich who lived on the island – men were often drunk and in quest of sexual conquests – as well as the escapism present in the ambition of those who took their profits and returned to France. Even between the wealthy a social hierarchy of race existed: there was division between the creoles and the French proprietors. And then there were the *petits blancs* who were traditional colonists hopeful to make a fortune in planting. Still others were escapees leaving France due to sordid pasts. These are the men who would upset the delicate balance of political life in St. Domingue. As tensions steadily grew military service would prove to be the bone of contention that reverted class in St. Domingue from wealth based to race based.

By 1761 St. Domingue had suffered numerous natural disasters and epidemics. No less foreboding, the British seemed poised to attack the island. "In 1764, reports of mounting social disorder, uneasiness about relying on free colored soldiers, and the expense of defending the colony with professional troops, all convinced Versailles to reestablish the colony's militia and military government."²⁴ Jean Baptiste Charles Henri Hector, Comte d'Estaing was made lieutenant general of the French army, a *chef d'escarde* (rear admiral) in the French navy in 1762 and, in 1764, governor general of the

²³ Quoted in Charles Frostin, "Les 'enfants perdus de l'État' ou la condition militaire à Saint-Dominge au XVIIIe siècle," *Annales de Bretagne*, Vol. 80, Issue 80-2, pages 317-343. pp. 319

²⁴ Garrigus, 119. At one point militia service had been compulsory for any free man on the island between the age of 15 and 55; however, rich planters often sent slaves in their place feeling such work was below them.

Leeward Islands.²⁵ His base was St. Domingue. The reinstatement of a conscripted militia was received poorly by whites. Others split in opinion, either enjoying the idea of a new opportunity for advancement or fearing conscription was simply a means to enslave the *gens de couleur libres*. These fears were not without warrant. Free men of color aged sixteen to nineteen were required to join a cavalry unit, if they chose not to they could risk being re-enslaved.²⁶

Tension undoubtedly rose due to historic treatment of free people versus public sentiment in France. Peabody notes that only “159 blacks and other people of color were registered in Paris in 1762.”²⁷ Indeed, given the legislation and the general approval of d’Estaing’s policies in the mid-seventeenth century it would appear that Versailles had lost touch with the colonial enterprises needs and the deft touch present in the Code Noir. By 1779 a clothing ban was placed on people of color lest they appear too much like the whites of the colony. And, still, the *petits blancs* became increasingly annoyed by the successes of the *gens de couleur libres*. Whites in St. Domingue, both *grands blancs* and *petits blancs*, were at a mathematical disadvantage as their combined numbers were about

²⁵ d’Estaing has a particularly salient relationship with Louis XV. Garrigus states, “His appointment was rumored to be compensation for his half-sister’s amorous service to Louis XV” (119). Moreover, he went to school with Louis the Dauphin, father of Louis XVI. His participation in the Seven Years’ War earned him the rank of brigadier general and the Order of Saint Louis. His work with the French East India Company, and attacks on British forts and ships, earned him the rank of field marshal and would lead to his various appointments in the 1760s. Even though a remarkably distinguished man and revolutionary sympathizer he would be unable to escape the guillotine during the Terror: d’Estaing was beheaded on April 28, 1794. His final words being, “Quand vous aurez fait tomber ma tête, envoyez là aux Anglais, ils la paieront cher!” For more see Jean Joseph Robert Calmon-Maison, *L’Amiral d’Estaing (1729-1794)*, Paris: C. Lévy, 1910.

²⁶ In one of the more draconian measures free women of color were required to provide a man to serve in their stead or the price of a male slave.

²⁷ Sue Peabody, *There Are No Slaves in France: The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. pp. 75.

equal to the *gens de couleur libres*. Black slaves, however, outnumbered all freemen at a ratio of ten to one. Heintz writes:

As the eighteenth century drew to a close, St. Domingue, for all its opulence, was a sick society at war with itself. The slaves mutely endured hideous grievances; the *affranchis* were systematically denied basic rights and freedoms theirs in law; and the white *colons* bickered selfishly, or blindly devoted themselves to the pursuit of wealth and pleasure. ‘This colony of slaves,’ wrote the Marquis du Rouvray in 1783, ‘is like a city under the imminence of attack; we are treading on loaded barrels of gunpowder.’²⁸

Information traveled quickly to the colony – this was a maritime trading post after all. Ships came in daily with new information about new policies in France and the revolution itself. Newspapers in France called outright for the abolishment of slavery in the colonies. “When whites began lynching mulattos who publicly demanded rights, the mulattos prepared an insurrection [...] in October of 1790 [Vincent Ogé] lead 350 mulattos in an attack on Cap François.”²⁹ French troops responded and were repelled by the rebellion. Ogé attempted to flee but was captured and extradited by the Spanish. “He and his fellow conspirator Jean Baptiste-Chavannes were condemned to be executed, broken on the wheel, and their heads displayed on pikes to dissuade others.”³⁰ The extreme punishment, in the face of a popular cause, served to martyr Ogé both at home and in Paris.

²⁸ Heintz, 37.

²⁹ Jack Censer and Lynn Hunt, *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001. pp. 123.

³⁰ Dubois, 88.

In Paris on 15 May, 1791, a resolution had been agreed upon in large part thanks to the efforts of Julien Raymond, a wealthy indigo planter and *mulâtre* who owned a large plantation in St. Domingue. Raymond had moved to Paris in 1785 and often gave speeches as well as distributed pamphlets trying to raise awareness, especially to the National Assembly, of colonial racism. In one such pamphlet Raymond tries to historicize the situation in St. Domingue:

Les planteurs blancs, qui sont les aristocrates, les nobles des colonies, veulent ôter ces droits [full political voting rights] inestimables aux mulâtres, qu'ils détestent et qu'ils veulent dégrader. Pour y parvenir, ils ont artificieusement confondu la cause des gens de couleur avec celle des esclaves; et cette confusion réfléchie a tellement embrouillé les idées, sur le véritable état des gens de couleur libres, que, jusqu'à ce moment, une grande partie des membres de l'assemblée nationale n'ont pas encore des notions bien claires, sur la classe des gens de couleur libres et propriétaires [...] Les colonies, un peu avant la guerre de 1744, avoient fixé davantage les yeux de la métropole, parce qu'elles produisoient déjà beaucoup. Il y passa beaucoup d'euro péens; les femmes même franchirent les mers en grand nombre, pour y chercher la fortune dont elles étoient dépourvues; des mères y menèrent leurs filles pour les marier à de riches colons. Leurs vœux furent souvent trompés. Comme elles venoient sans fortune, bien des jeunes gens qui passoient dans les colonies pour y acquérir des richesses, préféroient d'épouser des filles de couleur, qui leur portoient en dot des terres et des esclaves, qu'ils faisoient valoir. Ces préférences commencèrent à donner de la jalouise aux femmes blanches.³¹

Raymond concludes that the final indignities came in 1769 when free men of color were stripped of their officers' commissions and a series of laws regulating what clothes only whites could wear. Jealousy at the success of free men of color and *mulâtres* was the cause of racial tension in St. Domingue. Moreover, it is important to stress as Raymond does that lawmakers of the National Assembly in Paris were confusing the varying

³¹ Julien Raymond, *Origine du préjugé des Blancs contre les hommes de couleur des colonies*, Paris (1791). pp.1-5

problems of race and class by lumping all matters related to color of skin together. Nonetheless, a compromise in Paris on May 15 created a social hierarchy which acknowledged some men of color as elite and full citizens of France. That was in France. In St. Domingue, however, Governor Blanchelade along with his fellow white colonists refused to acknowledge the decree; furthermore, his agents in Paris made certain a formal issue never even reached St. Domingue. In July white colonists in Cap Français sung in creole “Mulattos can never be white Only we are masters.”³²

Progressive minded, but politically conservative free men of color had been meeting in early August to discuss the problems in St. Domingue. They went to Blanchelade and asked him to support all French laws both old and new. He dismissed them and ordered them to disband. Diplomacy having failed, on August 21, 1791, Dutty Boukman, a runaway slave from Jamaica, performed a Vodun ceremony in the Bois Cayman on the Normand Plantation. All in attendance swore to take revenge:

The Lord is hidden in the heavens,
 And there He watcheth over us.
 The Lord seeth what the blancs have done.
 Their god commandeth crimes,
 Ours giveth blessing upon us.
 The Good Lord hath ordained vengeance.
 He will give strength to our arms and courage to our hearts.
 He shall sustain us.
 Cast down the image of the god of the blancs,
 Because he maketh the tears to flow from our eyes.
 Hearken unto Liberty that speaketh now in all our hearts.³³

³² Quoted in Garrigus, 259.

³³ Heintz, 43.

“[It] was sealed by drinking the blood of a black pig sacrificed before them.”³⁴ Heint gives an even more salacious account, “Still on their knees, warm blood sticky on their lips, the slaves swore a fearful oath of obedience to their leaders and death to all *blancs*.”³⁵ The following day, St. Domingue was in turmoil. 100,000 slaves were rioting.³⁶ Walter Rucker gives a unique perspective on why Boukman may have been so impactful in instigating the slave riots:

If Boukman was in fact an Akan speaker, this would represent a significant phenomenon. Because belief in conjure and magic could be found amongst most West African peoples, the conjurer in the Americas served as a cultural bridge, with the ability of transcending cultural differences between African groups. As an Akan-speaking Vodun priest, Boukman influenced the actions of Aja-speaking Yoruba, Edo, and Fon as well as the Bantu-speaking Kongolese and Angolans, the principal import populations in the decades leading up to the revolution. The notion among European slave traders and planters that randomizing or mixing African ethnic groups effectively undermined resistance would have been rendered implausible with the presence of such cultural bridges as the conjurer and with the shared belief among many African – and American – born slaves in the powers of conjurers to wield supernatural and magical forces.³⁷

Linguistic and cultural unity served to unite where governance would not.

Not every white was blind to the situation in St. Domingue. Two senior soldiers – du Rouvray and Touzard – pleaded with fellow white plantation owners not to make

³⁴ Dubois, 100.

³⁵ Op. cit.

³⁶ Events in France were not helping the situation in St. Domingue as on 15 May the National Assembly revoked the political rights given to *mulâtres* the previous May.

³⁷ Walter Rucker, “Conjure, Magic, and Power: The Influence of Afro-Atlantic Religious on Slave Resistance and Rebellion,” *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Sep., 2001), pp. 84-103. pp. 91.

enemies of the *gens de couleur* nor the *mulâtres*.³⁸ These reasoned arguments fell on deaf ears. So it was that slaves took their revenge. During the summer of 1791 plantations were looted and burned. Barricades blocked the streets. In October slave insurgents captured a group of white men whom they had been fighting. One of these men was a local official named Gros, he writes:

After our defeat, we were chained two by two, and placed in the center of the strongest escort of *nègres* and mulattos [...] As we left our home in this sorrowful state, we saw fire devour our greatest possessions [...] These villains amused themselves by forcing us to see our brothers' mutilated corpses and by painting a picture of the tortures they were going to inflict on us when we reached Grande-Rivière [...] Jeannot [...] came to visit us [...] and, having reproached us for the death of Ogé [...] announced that we would be sacrificed two by two, and every twenty-four hours, in order to stretch out the enjoyment of it.³⁹

Leaving aside the ironic disbelief of Gros at his and his companions' treatment, we can note that almost all of these men were spared. They were moved to the camp at Dondon and, Gros claims, "they believed that the king [Louis XVI] had been imprisoned and that they had been ordered to arm themselves and restore his liberty; they were aware of the destruction of the clergy and the nobility [...] the slave revolt is a counter-revolution."⁴⁰ During Gros' imprisonment at Dondon that Boukman Dutty died. "It would be impossible to tell you the effect this death had on the *nègres*. The leaders went into mourning and ordered a solemn service [...] Already we heard the speeches of the

³⁸ Op. cit. at 51. Heintz provides the full text of both men's speeches.

³⁹ Gros, "In the Camp of the Insurgents," *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean 1789-1804: A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Laurent Dubois and John D. Garrigus, Boston: Bedford, 2006. pp. 103-4.

⁴⁰ Id. at 105. It is further noted by Gros that as head of the "African army" Jean-François wore the cross of St. Louis and his personal guard wore bandoliers covered with fleur-de-lys.

nègres; their criminal conspiracies frightened us, for these cannibals proposed nothing less than assassinating us to avenge their chief.”⁴¹ The execution of Boukman had indeed been extreme, “surrounded by a troop of cavalry and gunned down during a battle. He was decapitated, his body burned by the French troops in view of the insurgent camps, and his head displayed on a stake in the main plaza of Le Cap.”⁴² The complete destruction of the body of Boukman was most likely to prove that he, in fact, possessed no mystical powers. The preservation of his head not only stood as visual confirmation to other insurgents but a symbol of French “justice.”

Being escorted back to Le Cap by a squadron of free black dragoons must have not only felt unseemly to Gros but unnerving. Le Cap was still fogged with smoke from burning sugar cane – the cash crop that had made some rich was exceedingly flammable and an easy target for the insurgents. Though Boukman’s head now resided on a pike, and though the whites perceived him as the instigator of the fighting, Gros probably wished him alive upon finding out that his former captor had succeeded Boukman. The parallels between the 1789 Estates General and the goings on in Le Cap in the summer of 1791 are unmistakable. Men of color were held in low regard and the stubborn whites could not see the danger of ninety percent of the population armed and angry. Negotiations began poorly enough as a planter stepped forward to the ever elegantly dressed free man of color Jean-François and struck him in the face. By September negotiations had failed and on 22 November, Port-au-Prince was in flames due to fighting.

⁴¹ Id. at 105-106. Gros continues on in his observance to show some sympathy for the monarchist cause, “[Boukman] dead for the most just of causes, the defense of his king.”

⁴² Dubois, 124.

Days of fighting, turned into weeks, into months. White plantation owners even sought to make deals with the British ceding control of the colony to the most hated of French rivals.

In France a new political tactic emerged. Jean-Paul Marat concluded that the white plantation owners were getting nothing less than they deserved for ignoring the will of the National Assembly. Speeches in the National Assembly decried the planters as counterrevolutionaries in light of their covert dialogues with England. On April 4, 1792 all freemen were given full political rights and declared equal. Moreover, the decree would carry the signature of Louis XVI and would be enforced by three new commissioners – Etienne Polverel, Léger-Félicité Sonthonax, Ailhaud – and 6000 soldiers.⁴³

Over the course of the next year Sonthonax would prove to be the pivotal figure in St. Domingue political and military history. Described as a person, “prepared to lie, betray, consign to the Terror and the guillotine, and line his own pockets in the process,” Sonthonax had one cause he would not be unfaithful to: abolition.⁴⁴ Heil’s characterization foregrounds the means by which Sonthonax would achieve his most regarded accomplishment. Returning to the military as one of the prime sources of racial instability, Sonthonax ordered that at least one officer in each unit stationed in Le Cap be a free man of color. The local regiment refused. Rebuffing Sonthonax in private would

⁴³ Heil, 55. Of Ailhaud, Heil writes, “a person of no importance who soon returned to France.” Ailhaud indeed left for France immediately after the three commissioners split up and left his third of the colony under the control of Polverel.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

have been one matter; however, the troops, who had been commanded to assemble publicly to swear and oath the the April 4 decree, showed great contempt for the commissioner. Sonthonax was not the only one who took offense that day: Pierre Pinchinat, a mulatto French educated lawyer and soldier, was present with his infantry.⁴⁵ Fear prevailed. Sonthonax was so embarrassed and enraged that he threatened to deport those who defied him. Whites feared for their families, homes, and lives. Free men of color grew tired of insults and attacks. “The deadlock was finally broken on the night of December 5, 1792. After dithering for several days and seeking to placate the whites, Sonthonax decided on a decisive stroke: he ordered the arrest of four men – Verneuil, Jean Baillio, Claude Fournier, and Charles Gervais – whom he had identified as the leading white troublemakers.”⁴⁶ The following day peace was restored. Amusingly, however, locals, friends, and family of the four imprisoned men came pleading for their release only to find out that the prison had in fact been a brig and the men were on there way to France. Sonthonax was now certain that his strongest allies in St. Domingue were free men of color.

1793 would be the critical moment when French slavery would be toppled. In February and March, France was at war with the three great naval powers of the day: Spain, Britain, and Holland. Nearby Jamaica, under British control, served as a safe haven for French émigrés. Ten days after the death of Louis XVI now Citizen Capet, traitor, the Convention declared war on all monarchs. Sonthonax was ordered to handle

⁴⁵ Pierre Pinchinat was already hated by whites who saw him as the instigator of all troubles in the Cap.

⁴⁶ Popkin, 116.

the difficult politics of St. Domingue while the native Port-au-Prince born General Thomas-François Galbaud was made governor. The two men were destined to clash. Galbaud sympathized with the propertied class in the Cap, Sonthonax had long been by now a strong advocate for men of color.⁴⁷ In only two months the men would escalate their personal power struggles into all out war. On April 7, 1793 Sonthonax had Galbaud arrested as a traitor only for the latter to escape and take command of the French fleet in the bay.⁴⁸ Under guard Galbaud was taken to the ship *La Normandie* for transport back to France. However, Admirals Cambis and Gersey saw validity in his claim to leadership. And, by April 21, 1793 Galbaud found himself ahead in the battle having secured several harbors and forts including the arsenal at La Cap, “the sailors were only too ready to take out their anger on the commissioners’ main supporters, the free men of color.”⁴⁹ “Sonthonax and Polverel [the other commissioner at the time] escaped capture thanks to the protection of a troop led by the African-born officer Jean-Baptiste Belley.”⁵⁰ Moreover, Sonthonax had planned to increase his odds of victory. During the night he and Polverel sent word that any man who fought on the republican side would be freed.

The slave leader Macaya was the first to take the offer bringing 2500 or more slaves. Pierrot would follow next with an even greater number. As the two slave leaders charged into the Cap – their armies in tow wielding pikes and machetes – other slaves

⁴⁷ Dubois quotes Sonthonax speaking to Galbaud, “Understand, citizen, that the only thing white about me is my skin.” pp. 156.

⁴⁸ Heintz, 58-9.

⁴⁹ Popkin, 151.

⁵⁰ Dubois, 157.

within the town joined the fray. “To escape slaughter, torture, and rape, the townspeople fled with what they could carry to the quays, where Galbaud’s troops, unable to stem the *noir* onrush, could at least cover the landings.”⁵¹ In many regards Polverel’s decree had opened Pandora’s Box. The slaves had indeed won the day. Billows of smoke rose from the Cap. Likewise, screams of terror could be heard all around. From one of the fort towers Galbaud looked on; from another the white republican leaders. Some simultaneous reaction must have occurred when both groups of white men, mostly foreign to this land, realized *noir* and *blanc* had been equalized in blood. The Terror of France had come to St. Domingue. Though, in St. Domingue, republicanism was not enough. *Liberte, égalité, fraternité, ou la mort.*⁵²

Galbaud retreated. Arms and gunpowder were sunk in the harbor. Thousands upon thousands of anxious troops and émigrés jammed onto whatever ships they could. *Jupiter* would be Galbaud’s escape. “On the 23rd, while flames still rolled through the corpse-ridden town, the ships weighed anchor, nor for France but for the capes of the Chesapeake and exile.”⁵³ Polverel and Sonthonax returned to the Cap five days after the siege ended. They ordered the mass of bodies to be piled and burned. Whereas a few days before there had been a baptism by blood to cleanse the island of years of complex hierarchical racial discrimination; now, a crucible would literally meld every race of body together leaving behind a race free ash. On August 29, 1793 Sonthonax declared all on

⁵¹ Heintz, 59.

⁵² Sonthonax would create new military units called *régénérés* for the freed slaves; they would be called *Liberté* and *Egalité*.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

the island to be friends and equals. That evening he wrote to the Convention telling them what he had done. Demanding their acquiescence rather than their approval.

“Painful Assurances”

Man has built up the rational world by his own efforts, but there remains within him an undercurrent of violence. Nature herself is violent, and however reasonable we may grow we may be mastered anew by a violence no longer that of nature but that of a rational being who tries to obey but who succumbs to stirrings within himself which he cannot bring to heel.⁵⁴

Shifting now from our discussion of St. Domingue, I would like to explore eighteenth century paintings which not only acknowledge the institution of slavery but provide commentary as well. Representations of slave conditions are rare. In terms of painting they do not possess a genre, thus, are usually only to be found in abolitionist pamphlets and travel logs of the time.⁵⁵ In this section I would like to analyze the works of two artists: George Morland and William Blake. My purpose is to show modes of viewership reliant upon communion and self-identification. I do not wish to enter into a discussion of abolition nor its history; rather, I seek to explore how the works of Morland and Blake strive to evoke empathy in the viewer. This section is about the representation of the black slave body rather than slavery itself. I am taking singular interest in the

⁵⁴ Georges Bataille, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, San Francisco: City Lights, 1986. pp. 40.

⁵⁵ See Peter Hogg, *The African slave trade and its suppression: A classified and annotated bibliography of books, pamphlets and periodical articles*, Cass Library of African Studies, General Studies, No. 137, London: Frank Cass, 1973. In the last two years of the 1780s there were over one hundred such publications.

manifestation of a certain type of imagery and a very specific presentation of the body. I will look at Morland's *The Slave Trade* and *African Hospitality* as precursors to Blake's illustrations for Stedman's *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam*. In Morland we will find a message suggesting a brotherhood of man. By comparison *The Slave Trade* will be a transgression against humanity itself while *African Hospitality* will be a dark exposure of European shortsightedness. In Blake we will not be given the opportunity for subtlety. Blake literally will go for the gut as he exposes the horror and tortures involved with the slave trade. Feelings of oneness will be experienced in Blake, but not as they were in Morland. Whereas in Morland, European spectators are to casually identify or not in Blake the same audience is meant to be one with the suffering bodies. One type of viewership, Morland's, allows distance and reflection while the other, Blake's, deploys spectacle to overwhelm the visual interlocutor. While the intended goal of both artists is to critique the institution of slavery I shall conclude my study here in playing devil's advocate by suggesting that Morland's images could leave themselves open to deliberate misinterpretation by the viewer and provide reassurance as to the virtues of the slave trade and, through Blake's work, demonstrate European dominance over the African body in manner which could have appealed to the sadistic impulses of an eighteenth century European viewer.

Ships overcrowded with captives would leave Africa bound for the Americas. Shackled to the floor like cattle, soon to be slaves would be forced to make the twelve week journey across the Atlantic with little food or water. A British etching for the Regulated Slave Act of 1788 provides a disturbing insight into these harsh travel

conditions. Dysentery and scurvy would often set in and the mortality rate was exceptionally high with, on average, fifteen percent of slaves dying during the voyage:

Mortality was always three to four times higher for slaves and crews of slavers than for free migrants and their crews. The slave trade recorded about 60 deaths per month per 1,000 people shipped [...] Appalling as mortality rates on slaving vessels were, deaths in the Middle Passage were always a small part of overall mortality in the process of enslavement. Far more slaves died either in Africa in being captured, marched to the coast, and detained in barracoons [...] The vast majority of slaves who left Africa made it alive across the Atlantic – about 85 percent.⁵⁶

French ships like the *Duc du Maine* and the *Aurore* would transport up to 500 to 600 slaves each. The abhorrent conditions and overcrowding of Africans, especially in relation to the thirty or so crew members, often led to slave revolts. Generally unsuccessful, the resulting punishments were extreme, “As early as 1720, a slave trader John Akins referred to a resistance movement led by one Chief Tamba [...] Captured and sold into slavery, Tamba organized a shipboard revolt with help from a woman slave. He was killed by the slavers, who forced his companions to eat his heart and liver before being killed in their turn, to serve as an example to survivors of the clamp-down.”⁵⁷ Such were the conditions for the child Jean-Baptiste Belley when he was captured and transported to St. Domingue.

On an exotic tropical seaside Morland sets his scene for *The Slave Trade*. In the foreground we see two captured male Africans: one collapses his face into his hands out

⁵⁶ James Horn and Philip D. Morgan, “European and African Migrations to Early Modern British America,” *The Creation of the British Atlantic World*, ed. Elizabeth Mancke and Carole Shammas, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005. pp. 30.

⁵⁷ Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. pp. 121.

of shame and fear while the other rebels. These two men are mirrored by two more prisoners in one of the rowboats, and are again echoed in the two shirtless Africans who are chained by both hand and neck in the center of the painting. Beyond these two figures are two towering hut-like structures. Doubling and mirroring is incredibly strong in Morland's composition. Apart from the two rowboats, where inside we may find two overlapping oars, there are two slave ships poking into the image. The man preparing to strike his recent capture seems paired with the boy beneath him who pulls a rowboat into the water. Morland gives the implication of slave trading as a family business. We might logically think that this father and son are reflected by the mother and son but this is not the case. Instead, to the far right of the painting we can see a mother and daughter African pair who are apparently in cahoots with white slavers. These women are betrayers who have helped the Europeans enslave other Africans. Each woman wears a European style pearl earring in at least her left ear indicating not only the cultural contact but the success of their profession. There is something disturbing in the caning gesture of the European and the complementary oddity and disproportion of the young girl holding a rifle. Furthermore, the general casualness of the scene provides an overall uneasy quality for the viewer. When writing on Morland, John Barrell talks about moments in Morland excluding the viewer from aspects of the painting, as though Morland's paintings were capable of containing private moments between his figures, as well as the foreshadowing of circumstances.⁵⁸ In *The Slave Trade* we have both. Knowing jokes (the white man in

⁵⁸ John Barrell, *The Darkside of Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting 1730-1840*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980. pp. 114-116.

the rowboat), private conversation (the African, her daughter and the slaver), suggestion (the slaver and the black woman) are all moments from which we the viewer are excluded yet they further the narrative. Sorrow abounds among the captured men and we know that soon the rebellious man at the center of the painting will be broken and shackled like those who surround him.

The separation scene of husband from wife and child ultimately drives the narrative of *The Slave Trade*. Along with the angered slaver these three figures are the only ones possessing any legible expression. Overall, Morland's composition is overcrowded with ancillary figures. By combining the actions of two of the white figures into one Morland could have achieved a clearer narrative and, indeed, strengthened the legibility of the story. Furthermore, reducing the number of white figures would have added to historical accuracy. The modern viewer might argue that in Morland we see a sanitized slave trade. True, there is the brief moment of violence which is surely meant to be a critique; however, the painting lacks in any impulse to horrify the viewer through spectacle as we will see in Blake. Barrell states that, "The images of the poor we find in Morland's paintings are now [...] generally regarded as placid, sentimental, perhaps Arcadian [...]. But this is not how his works appeared to his contemporaries. We can detect the threat that many of them represented to the ideal version of the poor, as tame, domesticated, and industrious."⁵⁹ Surely adjectives such as "tame" and "domesticated" can apply to the slave trade but in a bitter tenor. Morland's bucolic landscape envelops the narrative and calms the situation. There are two legible actions that disrupt the

⁵⁹ Id. at 99.

serenity: the gesture to strike and the look of terror on the wife's face. Morland affords the black body empathy. The white body is tied to economy, it is a greedy body bedecked in silks unsuited to the African coast. Not only do these men exude violence but, as we observe to our right, there is a quality of sleaze to them. Two overlapping gestures of white men toward black women slither across the image reminding this viewer, anachronistically, of used car salesmen. Morland's African male bodies, which we can see clearer in *African Hospitality*, project naïveté even in respect to their own muscularity – there is never the hint of overpowering the white men in Morland. These bodies are purer and of nature, they are strong and healthy, they are workers' bodies, and as critics have noted they are bodies without affect.⁶⁰

Morland's figures often blend seamlessly with their surroundings; so much so that alien figures truly are disruptive to the gaze of the viewer. White bodies, with regard to *The Slave Trade* and *African Hospitality*, are such visual disturbances. Subsuming of figures into an environment, however, can lull the viewer into dangerous complacency when approaching Morland. In the case of *Children Playing at Soldiers* the artist domesticates war as a child's game and, as such, conjures an eerie scene with both boys and girls at the ready for battle. Violence is completely lacking in the playful pastels and airy brushwork. Any viewer might pass by this painting and smile, not giving a second thought to the veneer glossing over all that war implies. The sentiment in *Children Playing at Soldiers* can be felt in *The Slave Trade*. Both images are anchored in competing female, and thereby domestic, visions. With regard to *Children Playing at*

⁶⁰ Id. at 90.

Soldiers a matronly figure sits on the right side of the painting seemingly instructing an infant in the ways of this game, a game of war. To the left of the painting a young girl petulantly sits refusing to join in. Likewise, as I have said, the narrative of *The Slave Trade* is centered around the breaking up of the family unit while, at the same time, the slavers are indebted to the other female in the picture who sold her countrymen to the Europeans. This black female figure takes the place of the motherly figure in *Children Playing at Soldiers*. She is instructing her young daughter in the harsh vices of the world in order to make a profit: she is an eighteenth century, African Mother Courage. More to the point, she is shown not as a nude figure but adopting European manner in dress, further removing her from her place in Morland's Africa. Domesticity is again found in the background with the side by side huts. There is the implication that one's own neighbor may be the greatest betrayer when money is involved. Lastly, the son pulling the boat into the water learns the trade from his father: a truculent man striking at another whom he intends to enslave.

Scenes containing children often invoke a degree of sentimentality within the viewer. However, and this is also over all point made by Barrell, Morland rejects bathos. Instead, his images slowly bleed into you. War and play make for a stark contrast. Sometimes the beauty of the landscape challenges the scene, as in the case of *The Slave Trade*, and sometimes the worker's idleness disrupts our viewing of a piece to question humanity and individuality with respect to the figure we are looking upon. Honour problematizes the quaint attitude in travel literature about slaves and Africa, "The essential and innate goodness of Africans was a theme on which travel writers as well as

abolitionists often dwelt. Parts of Africa were sometimes described as a kind of earthly paradise where life continued to be led as in the Golden Age.”⁶¹ For Honour, *The Slave Trade* is a moralizing piece.⁶² However, that analysis oversimplifies Morland’s technique and generally ignores the rest of his extensive body of work. We should look to dialectical oppositions in Morland’s works concerning slaves.

White bodies, or those of slavers, are reduced to physical ineffectualness. In *The Slave Trade* the central white figure must resort to violence by aid of a stick to muster authority; however, the longer we look at the painting the more we realize that he is indeed achieving nothing. *African Hospitality* shows us a shipwreck scene where at least three of the white male bodies are unconscious. Moreover, the white body is wrapped in endless layers of European clothing subverting any relationship to the heroic male nude. Contrasted, then, are the black male bodies whose lean muscularity and poise compels the viewer to linger and then reflect upon the inadequacies of the white body. So present are the black male bodies within their environment that they force the colorfully dressed white bodies into the sky of *The Slave Trade* resulting in a jumbled pastiche. Likewise, in *African Hospitality*, swooning white bodies read as foam and crashing waves, they are temporal to this coast whereas the black figures possess sturdiness like the rocks that line the coast. Black bodies work through the storm and waves trudging along the coast undeterred by nature. Indeed, the black figures’ oneness with nature cannot be missed and

⁶¹ Honour IV.I 72.

⁶² Ibid.

Morland provides and underscores this point by having a young African baby crawling out of the very sea which cripples the whites.

One cannot help but see the upturned and amazed eyes of the shipwreck survivors in *African Hospitality*. Norman Bryson points out in his discussion of legibility in LeBrun that, “Entering a positive state, wonder becomes esteem – the soul has found something attractive: the mouth begins to open, and the nostrils to descend towards the mouth; the eye, mobilised by the now activated pineal, revolves upwards in its orbit.”⁶³ Though there are three different positions in which the visible faces are shown the attributes described by Bryson are clearly present. Indeed, the central white figure essentially gawks at his black rescuer. Herein lies part of the effect of Morland. When looking upon *African Hospitality* humanity and salvation are the obvious initial responses. However, an eighteenth century white British viewer might be inclined to relate to the situation in similar terms described by Barrell:

In painting ‘the lowest part of society’ he was bringing within the range of what it was possible to paint a wide selection of the social outcasts whose company he habitually sought out. To a class of customers which was beginning to pride itself on its benevolence, this was indeed a service; and for the most part the increasing interest in the picturesque quality of the subject-matter of painting, which had already tamed the wildness of mountains, and reclaimed it for the ‘eye of taste’ by seeing it in terms of newly invented aesthetic categories, had enabled Morland to recuperate what was coarse and ugly in society also, and to make it similarly acceptable.⁶⁴

⁶³ Norman Bryson, *Word and Image: French Painting of the Ancien Régime*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. pp. 48

⁶⁴ Barrell 104-105.

In the previous section I discussed how part of the social compact, as relating to colonization and slavery, was to spread Christianity and, thus, in the minds of the colonizers provide salvation. A self-constructed moral imperative was yet another compulsory contrivance perpetrated against a people who were perfectly fine without white European intervention. Nonetheless, both works by Morland may be approached in a pro-slavery manner.

Ease of dominance is a large part of enslavement rhetoric. By making his figures so naive in *The Slave Trade*, Morland provides fodder for arguments of racial superiority in a time of empire building. To that end, *African Hospitality* becomes an apologist work. As I have said both works reflect well on African bodies in terms of morality. However, in trying to reduce the narrative of slavery and elevate the inherent goodness of Africans, Morland assumes that there are equivalences in shipwreck victims and the enslaved. Morland's community by the sea will quickly dissolve, and in the morning that man will not recall nor care that you nursed him back to consciousness the night before. The family unit from *The Slave Trade* has here been reconstructed and the power dynamic switched. A reunion takes place courtesy of the African familial group in the center. As she struggles to stay upright a black woman props up the white woman's body; whereas, in *The Slave Trade* the black female recoils from the white male body preparing to strike her husband. Over all the Africans are successful as reconcilers.

At the close of the eighteenth century the abolitionist cause had risen well beyond pamphlets and society groups. 1791 saw the slaves of St. Domingue rise in an effort to capture their own freedom. In England, John Stedman's *The Narrative of a Five Years*

Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam chronicles Stedman's own time in Surinam from 1772 through 1777. Two sharply contrasting narratives emerge in the story: the love story between Joanna and Stedman which produces a son Johnny, and the excessive abuse of slaves which, even at its most atrocious and bestial, somehow has the feeling of banality due to the commonplace nature of the abuse. Stedman writes of the "shocking" quality of each vignette but his horror is never allowed to become greater in intensity because it is always in the most extreme state. We may easily find comparison to Stedman in the Marquis de Sade's 1785 *Les 120 journées de Sodome* and the readerly numbing which comes with repetitive storytelling, even in the most disquieting recitals. William Blake provided jolting visuals to Stedman's account which took words from page and maximized narrative into image. The excerpts which Blake chose for his engravings illuminate the academic monstrous actions of slavers and plantation owners and bring an evocative reality to Stedman's prose.

Each of Blake's images from Stedman's work is worthy of a chapter unto itself. However I would like to narrow my study to two: *Negro Hung Alive by the Ribs to a Gallows* and *Europe Supported by Africa and America*. My purpose in selecting these two engravings over the others is both practical and in aid of drawing comparison to Morland as well as concluding with a challenge to the master / slave dynamic which will be the subject of the next section. Moreover, a majority of Blake's images in this series are a taxonomy of tortures and I feel that one image will serve my analysis just as well as four would. Moreover, because of Stedman's narrative, we will need to consider the sexual aspects of the slave trade as well as the voyeuristic qualities of Blake's engravings.

As with Morland there are various modes of viewership possible with empathy being the intended. However, Blake's use of the spectacle inherent in torture produces unintended artistic consequences. Depending upon how the viewer interacts with the image it is possible to invest the representation with empathy or allow it to fulfill a desire.

When analyzing Blake and Stedman, Mario Klarer uses a Freudian methodology to explore the pornographic qualities of both men's work. Klarer concludes, "Detailed description, mainly the depiction of erotically stylized pain, seems to carry particular significance for texts of the period [...] Their insistence on stylizing the body as a site for projecting truthful incidents like torture, mutilation, and death aims at awakening in the reader compassion that should ideally prompt action against the injustice described."⁶⁵ Klarer's reading implies that the viewer should approach Blake's images as the action within the text. First we have a readerly relationship with the material which sets up Stedman's *mise-en-scène*. Blake's images enliven the response from the reader/viewer. Unlike simply viewing an image, text sets the scene for us. In other words there is a determined contrivance that precedes the act. Linda Williams' study of pornography supports a Freudian model for porn discourse but only as read alongside a Marxist one. Williams has shown that pornography functions as a means by which to fetishize the unknown.⁶⁶ Williams writes, "Fetishization involves the construction of a substitute object to evade the complex realities of social or psychic relations. Fetishes are thus

⁶⁵ Mario Klarer, "Humanitarian Pornography: John Gabriel Stedman's 'Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam,'" *New Literary History*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (Autumn 2005), pp. 559-587. pp. 560.

⁶⁶ Linda Williams, *Hardcore: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible,"* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. It is worth noting that neither Wood nor Klarer use Williams.

short-term, short-sighted solutions to more fundamental problems of power and pleasure in social relations.”⁶⁷ Commodification can occur in relationship to the production of the fetish. This is easily relatable to slavery and the slave trade: the commodification of the human body. Klarer’s Freudian model allows the viewer to access Blake’s work, “Through reliving the experience presented” and “convert[ing] it into a personal one.”⁶⁸ Thus, our experience with the images of Blake, which themselves are a substitute for the work of Stedman, which again is substituting for the actuality of slave trade, fits with Williams’ definition of fetishization and it is through fetishizing Blake’s reduction which the viewer is able to observe the commodity fetish of slavery. We may buy Stedman’s book and receive reassurances of our fetish through Blake’s production of the visual. Abolitionists may consume the image and be appalled, yet, this is the gratification which they were seeking. Klarer also advises that this is the reaction we “should” be having. However, proslavery advocates may feel justified in the treatment of the black body and take sadistic pleasure in the power structure of white domination of black bodies. Stedman’s work undoubtedly served as a welcome balm to Europeans and Americans who were proslavery and observing not only the slave uprisings in St. Domingue but also the 1794 emancipation of the slaves by the French Republican government.⁶⁹

For me, the means into Blake’s work is to acknowledge that the prints substitute narrative the same way that Stedman’s book substitutes experience. This returns us to

⁶⁷ Id. at 105.

⁶⁸ Klarer 562.

⁶⁹ The popularity of Stedman’s work can be seen in its publication history. The first printing was in London in 1796. A second edition was printed in 1806, and a third printed in 1813. Moreover, the text was translated into Dutch, German, French, Swedish, and Italian.

Williams' point that both book and art are evasions of a larger social issue: in this case of slavery. Both objects provide us with controlled experiences. In looking or reading we are enabled to virtualize slavery in its various manifestations but always at a safe distance. As Klarer notes, "we are not really responsible."⁷⁰ The spectacle of the torture is supposed to move us. If we eroticize, or read as eroticized, the image then that is our own choice to fetishize the power structure. We could, after all, just as easily be repelled. Blake merely wants us to empathize with the suffering through mentally entering into the narrative. Image and narrative may transcend into pornography if empathy is corrupted by the individual viewer's desires. Pornography is reductive to Blake and Stedman and occurs moment where spectacle overtakes the altruism that Blake wants us to feel and we begin to release displaced libidinal desires: as I have said, this can take place on either side of the slavery issue.

I have taken the time to parse the argument of Blake's work in terms of pornography because I feel it is important to acknowledge the bifurcated effect of Blake's prints. In certain respects it is likely that a contemporary eighteenth century viewer would also share the pornographic readings I have described above. Dominance and repressed libidinal desire can be seen everywhere with regard to the slave trade, so much so that they are spelled out in the Code Noir. Furthermore we have already traced various racial problems that emerged as a result of sex and the slave trade. In terms of my own reading of Blake I would like to make it clear that empathy and pornography are not the same nor is empathy, to my mind, necessary with regard to pornography. Displacement and

⁷⁰ Ibid.

projection are the means by which the viewer may be placed into pornography. Empathy has pathos at its root and so is tinted by the idea of sadness. Furthermore, Blake's work seeks empathy from the viewer by asking us to place ourselves in the other's situation. As with Morland we must avoid the impulse to react to rather than invest in the artwork.

Negro Hung Alive by the Ribs to a Gallows is Blake at his most graphic and echoes his Oothoon saga found in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*.⁷¹ Flesh has been ripped from bone revealing the ribcage of a black male slave who is pierced through his side. Liver and lung are in horrific proximity to the hook. Below his left foot a fragment of rib cage litters the ground. A skull too greets the viewer and takes us deeper into the image where two further skulls rest on pikes looking out to the sea where a slave ship floats on clam waters. Blood gushes from the wound and cascades downward watering the bone garden beneath the gallows. The black figure's body writhes with frenetic convulsions; coupled with the upward turn of his eyes the viewer may well be reminded of the *Laocoön*. Various authors have found "dignity" in these figures but I am at a loss to see anything except immeasurable agony.⁷² Stedman writes of the incident, "in this manner he kept living three days hanging with his head and feet downward."⁷³ Blake's image presents us with a liminal period between life and death. Materially, our only

⁷¹ Blake's work here is likewise dominated by violence and fetishistic sexuality.

⁷² Albert Boime, *Art in the Age of Revolution 1750-1800*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987. pp. 341. See also: David V. Erdman, "Blake's Vision of Slavery," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 15, no. 3/4 (1952), pp. 242-252. pp. 244.

⁷³ John Gabriel Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam: Transcribed for the First Time from the Original 1790 Manuscript*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988. pp.103.

assurance of life is the amount of blood flowing from an upward facing laceration. As the head and feet likewise drip downward we enter into the space of death.

While Blake is very specific with regard to torture his figures do possess an overall generic quality. It is hard to distinguish between the male and female faces in *Negro Hung Alive by the Ribs to a Gallows* and *Flagellation of a Female Samboe Slave*. Indeed, both bodies are comprised of a similar s-shaped line, ballooning at the hips. African female figures are given a muscularity which parallels their male counterparts. Her legs dangle the same as his but in reverse. Even the structure of the gallows finds its mirror in the tree from which the female slave hangs. By making the slave bodies so similar Blake allows for us to empathize with the group as a whole. The cost, however, is individuality. Instead of being distinguishable from one another Blake's figures are demarcated by the ignominy which they undergo. This is where the spectacle of torture is overwhelming the image itself. We see image as torture and disassociate it from the original narrative. Even if empathize rather than fetishize the act of torture upon a body is what we are affected by. As I stated earlier we must have a readerly relationship with the image before we can immerse ourselves. Still, this can prove problematic as Stedman's narrative is sometimes presented as a taxonomy rather than providing in-depth background into the events which he highlights. We return, then, to the idea of fetish or pornographic image. The body of the African, even within the image, is reduced to providing the production of torture. Torture is what we over analyze and absorb; thus, fetishizing it. As we saw in Williams by focusing on the fetish (torture) we ignore or fail to problematize the power structure (slavery).

Stedman's account of the sexual availability of female slaves to European men, including his own experience, transition from at first being repulsed to eventually his producing a son, is present in Blake's work. However, Blake uses the device as a critique whereas Stedman, in the end, indulges in sentimentality over the death of Joanna whom he was unable to liberate. Sexual politics in Stedman and Blake are especially complicated. As Boime notes while they, "protested against the cruelest features of slavery, they could not accept the black person [...] as a full, integrated member of society. Like the abolitionists in general, their outraged cry of protest was articulated in mainly moral rather than political terms."⁷⁴ Stedman's own regard for slaves, even after being horrified by their treatment, was that slavery was needed as those whom Europeans had enslaved would be worse served by emancipation than continued slavery.⁷⁵

Nonetheless, we find in Blake's *Europe Supported by Africa and America* a woozy Europe. Drunken with her own power Europe drapes her arm over a Native American and is held upright by the African who also holds her hand. We see cuffs around the African and American's forearms. Moreover, the African wears a shackle and chain attached to her right arm. The labors of the non-white women support Europe literally and allegorically within the image. Sexuality and sexual vitality of a type which Europeans were fearful of can even be seen in the stylization of the African female's hair. As Angela Rosenthal writes, "The bejeweled Europe, embraces her colonial sisters. Her long, flowing tresses fall modestly to obscure her genitals; her civilizing hair sets her

⁷⁴ Boime (1990) 342.

⁷⁵ Stedman 171-173.

apart physically and morally. In contrast to the fair sinuous hair of the European, which was seen (by Europeans) to match an ideal purity and enlightened subjecthood, the ‘frizzy’ hair of Africans was regarded by some as ‘demonic, licentious, and pubic.’”⁷⁶

Though there is more modesty present in Botticelli’s *The Birth of Venus*, as well as other Renaissance *Veneres*, the contrast is an obvious one. Moreover, and particularly relevant to our discussion, Venus is the goddess of sex and prosperity: two things which we have found linked to the slave trade and certainly is linked to the exploitation of Native Americans.

Contrasting the African and white bodies in Blake’s *Europe Supported by Africa and America* to Morland’s *African Hospitality* provides salient parallels. Need, on the part of the white body, is the prevailing theme. Blake’s figures literally support the white, and in Morland whites are revived, protected, and drug from the wreckage of their ship. Worth noting too is the anti-cosmopolitanism present in the white bodes of Blake and Morland: these are not citizens of the world. Rather, they make the world subservient and alter its nature. Morland makes it abundantly clear: the whites would have died without the Africans. In Blake, though, it is slightly more subtle. Europe (the white figure) is out of place and nonfunctioning but what is her overall effect? I would suggest that, apart from the shackle on Africa’s arm, the gold bands are emblematic of an assertion of European aesthetics. Moreover, if we look to Blake’s *A Surinam Planter in His Morning Dress* we see the gaudy ridiculousness of European cultural non-assimilation. Still, Morland (in *The Slave Trade*) and Blake do show coinciding representations of a

⁷⁶ Angela Rosenthal, “Raising Hair,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 38, no. 1 (Fall 2004), pp. 1-16. pp. 4.

European power structure articulated around the slave body. Morland's images provide a dialectic of survivals. As I said earlier, I believe *African Hospitality* to be an apologist work, also it is mired in the immediacy of its narrative: there is no way of knowing what will happen the next day or when other Europeans arrive. *The Slave Trade* is a tamer version of Blake. We find in both artists the fulfillment of a visual need with European culture. An object that serves as a placeholder for guilt, desire, and domination. It is a structure of power that, once put in place, may easily be inverted.

“The Ties That Bind”

Having concluded the previous section with a discussion of the inhuman treatment of slaves shown by Morland, Stedman, and Blake I would now like to briefly present a challenge to the power dynamic of master and slave. In this section I will invert the relationship of master / slave through visual analysis of colonized bodies. Where does power actually lie, and what is the human face of the master slave dynamic in eighteenth century painting? To answer this question I will focus on John Trumbull's *The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker's Hill, 17 June 1775* as a case study for my argument. As a history painter in the eighteenth century Trumbull's work situates itself well with the works of John Copley and Benjamin West whom I will discuss later. Furthermore, *Bunker's Hill* furthers a dialogue of opposing depictions of slavery by exploiting the reliance of the master body upon slave body.

Grosvenor and his servant, “about to retreat, stop awestruck at the scene before them [...] The black servant rests a sentimental head on the shoulder of the wounded

lieutenant (who holds his bleeding chest), while pressed intimately behind as if to say, I've got your back."⁷⁷ Grosvenor's right hand is clearly injured and he waves it forward as if to sway back the British forces. Trumbull, who will remain a loyalist to America unlike Copley and West, was critiqued at the time for his propensity to depict American losses rather than victories. To be fair, though, Bunker's Hill was a victory at a devastating cost to the British. What is perhaps most remarkable about the Battle of Bunker's Hill and the subsequent painting is that Trumbull actually observed the entire battle.

Two structures of power collapse within Trumbull's painting: Dr. Warren is dead as is Major John Pitcairn. Peter Salem, the black figure, was responsible for the shot which felled Pitcairn. Trumbull writes of Grosvenor that he "hesitates" about what his actions should be, should he, "return and assist in saving a life, more precious to his country than his own."⁷⁸ It is Peter Salem who is reentering the fray. He pivots one hundred and eighty degrees from shooting Pitcairn to covering his master's back. The onslaught of British redcoats leading all the way back to Boston Harbor overwhelms the composition and terror is rightly felt by the pair of Grosvenor and Salem. There are four vignettes of loyalty presented in *Bunker's Hill*: the American holding the body of Warren, John Small protecting his former military master, Lieutenant Pitcairn holding Major Pitcairn's mortally wounded body, and Salem and Grosvenor who dominate the

⁷⁷ Elisa Tamarkin, *Anglophilia: Deference, Devotion, and Antebellum America*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. pp. 137.

⁷⁸ As quoted in: Irma Jaffe, *John Trumbull: Patriot Artist of the American Revolution*, New York: New York Graphic Society, 1975. pp. 316.

immediate foreground and right side of the canvas. Race only enters into the framework of *Bunker's Hill* through the latter pairing. Nonetheless, master / slave dialectics abound.

The image of the exotic intimate servant protecting a master brings to mind the trio in Girodet's *Revolt at Cairo* of which Darcy Grigsby writes, "In the *Revolt of Cairo*, the naked warrior [...] is irresistibly charismatic, the very center of a series of homosocial drams of loyalty, violent aggression, and self-sacrifice."⁷⁹ Grigsby continues by recognizing the classical allusions within *Revolt of Cairo – Suicidal Gaul and His Wife* and *Ajax Carrying the Body of Patroclus* – as well as the nod to Girodet's close friend Gros' *Bonaparte Haranguing the Army Before the Battle of the Pyramids*; yet, it would seem that Trumbull would be another link to include in her analysis.⁸⁰ As our goal is to eventually confront Girodet's *Belley* with a new art historical epistemology it is worth briefly discussing here Girodet's fascination with non-European bodes.

Belley, as we shall see, serves as Girodet's most pronounced early painterly entrancement with an exotic body. However, it is the *Revolt of Cairo* where Girodet's imagination really comes to life and we see the master slave dichotomy fully. Within the *Revolt of Cairo* a perfectly symmetrical line slices down the warrior's torso. Every sinew surges and we imagine the artist's brush licking at the canvas as he brings into reality flesh from paint. Like *Belley* we have an eccentric relationship between cloth and penis. With regard to the warrior, his penis is seemingly covered by a leather strap.⁸¹ However,

⁷⁹ Grigsby, 140.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ A similar leather strap can be seen again by the Mameluke's feet wrapped around the butt of a gun.

the illogically present loop of brown fabric seems to imply a considerable member that, if actually shown, would be near the same color. We must now contrast this with the more conspicuous fully erect sword of the warrior opposed to the limp, fallen sword of the Mameluke. In a final flourish, and there are many to be considered in the Mameluke's costume, blue cloth gives way to a green, vaginal orifice. Girodet's clothing and clothed figures fetishize the body in ways his nudes never really do. *Belley* and the Mameluke both challenge ideas of masculinity and, perhaps, reveal where the artist's own interests were. Coupin writes of Girodet, "son humeur était enjouée il était entouré de Mameloucks qui étaient, pour ainsi dire, à demeure chez lui, et dont la beauté l'électrisait."⁸² We too feel electricity as we look at *Revolt in Cairo*. Later I explore how the othered body is problematized around issues of phallogentric power with regard to the *Apollo Belvedere*.

The Mameluke's assertion of his virility is over exemplified by his nude body exploding from his clothes. Likewise, Salem possesses an ability to save the day even in the face of the death of Warren. Salem is quick thinking but more importantly he is quick to act. The second parallel is that of the dying General Joseph Warren and Major John Small. Enemies who once were friends during the French and Indian War, Small defends Warren's body from his British compatriots, "Small, who leans over Warren in a feminized posture of devotion and care."⁸³ Again, this is reflexive of the Mameluke and Bedouin in *Revolt of Cairo*. Girodet's ornately dressed Mameluke has fallen dead away

⁸² P. A. Coupin, *Œuvres Posthume de Girodet-Trioson, Peintre d'Histoire*, Vol. 1, Paris: Jules Renouard, 1829. pp. xviii.

⁸³ Tamarkin, 137.

from the wound to his neck. He languishes in the arms of the testosteroneic Bedouin who erupts from his clothing in a hulking gesture of both attack and defense. The Mameluke, who is clothed, communicates effete-ness to the viewer. Likewise, Warren is similarly shown in his dying moment. Moreover, he is protected by a similar complicated dichotomy of servant / master. Boime observes, “the central motif highlighting the action of the English major John Small in preventing a grenadier from bayoneting the expiring Warren.”⁸⁴

In regards to Small and Warren, Small represents England, the mother country and Warren is the colony. In the case of war they are enemies. Yet, in this depiction of an actual event – Trumbull was there to witness the battle – the relationship is that of the master protecting the servant. Juxtaposedly, on the right side of the canvas, Grosvenor is protected by his slave and, thus, the power structure is inverted. Servant protecting master in this manner is the gesture which Girodet utilizes in *Revolt of Cairo*. One cannot help but notice, though, the composition and position of Warren in *Bunker's Hill* and relate him to Girodet's *Endymion*. Indeed, the quality of death in Warren and the Bedouin strongly resemble the sleeping Endymion. You could almost imagine Small cradling Endymion's head as he does Warren's.

Further qualities of Trumbull's work appear to have crept into Davidian students' compositions. The dead supine soldier reminds one of the dead Napoleon soldier in Gros' *Battle of Eylau* which then reemerges as the decapitated Frenchman in *Revolt of Cairo*. The overt carnage of *Bunker's Hill* seems to forecast the compositional style of

⁸⁴ Boime (1990) 435.

Napoleonic battle paintings as well as anonymous sorrow and despair that can be found in the more unpropitious Romantic paintings. Trumbull, like Gros and Girodet, reduces figures to disembodied limbs and postures of collapse. Gros, of course, will become the nineteenth-century French painter most associated with battle or campaign paintings – again we think to *Eylau* as well as *Bonaparte Visiting the Plague Victims of Jaffa*. What cannot be underestimated is Trumbull’s reliance upon Copley before him. As we transition now to a deeper examination of the black figure in European painting we should remind ourselves of the dependence of *Bunker’s Hill* upon *The Death of Major Pierson*. In the next section I will show how the cultural shift occurred which allowed for not only greater assimilation by blacks into European society but also the inversion of the master / slave dialectic we have seen here.

“Hit”

A fourteen year old orphan boy looks out over the warm and inviting Atlantic waters both day and night as he sails from Boston to to Havana Harbor in the British West Indies. Moving from the New England coast, southward, the ocean’s lure grew in the heart of the young Brook Watson. Sailing on a ship owned by his guardian Levens, Watson covered the same route as the infamous Middle Passage – the final leg of the slave trade. Rum was the likely cargo. Rum to trade for sugar, molasses, and, of course, slaves. Upon reaching Havana Harbor the temptation of a respite, a quick swim, overcame the young man. The sun spreading its golden rays along the horizon, illuminating it and electrifying a pale blue sky, turning murky grey marine layer into golden billows – a welcoming sight to be sure. A light wind blew across the harbor. Small waves lapped against the hulls of

ships crusty with barnacles. Copley's water gleams like a green jewel as it meanders toward the horizon. Trade ships and Men of War weave around one other as they pass in and out of port. To the right the lighthouse of Morro Castle. The background was drawn from Peter Canot's engraving of Elias Durnfor's 1764 *A View of the Entrance of the Harbour of the Havana Taken from within the Wrecks*: the lighthouse and craggy rocks seem to be lifted directly from Canot's picture. As for the rest of the background, Copley re-imagines Havana as a far grander place, a metropolis of towering structures. And it is here where an immortalizing incident will forever change the life of Brook Watson.

For centuries art and literature have tried to capture the uncontrollable hold which the sea possesses over some men. Beauty is often intermingled with torment and catastrophe in these tales. Copley's epic painting is no different. It took three attacks for the shark to claim the lower half of Watson's right leg. Hit one, flesh is ripped from bone. The searing pain spreads quickly all over the body. Dark maroon arterial blood fills the water around the body. Writhing in agony or even attempting to swim away only serves to mix the blood further in the water, drawing the shark back. Hit two, the foot is dismembered. How many times a day do we take our right foot for granted. We walk to and fro not even thinking how vital it is to our anatomy. Sometimes, we casually push things aside or even caress a lover's leg with our foot. Now, the foot is gone. Torn from the body in a savage instant. Hit three, men yelling, the smell and taste of blood mingling with the salt water, the sharp pain of flesh being torn, your prey has escaped – the boat-hook has done its work. Nine men in a small boat saved the life of the young Watson. The third hit landed upon the shark that was all but ready to end a very short life.

Copley depicts his victim as a waif; and perhaps this is correct given Watson's orphan status. Through glass-like water you can easily count each of Watson's ribs. In a bit of judicious artistic license Watson's right leg is submerged, obscuring either the wound or foreshadowing the dismemberment. His nine rescuers are an assortment of colonial types whose quickly assembled outfits denote the hour of the day and urgency of the situation, as though each man sprung from his bed upon hearing the cries of Watson and rushed to help. Each emoting in his own way horror and concern, though, most are easily forgettable. On the bow stands the hero. His wind tousled hair streaming away from his face. He stabs at the shark with a boat-hook. Copley has granted this figure a generic statuesque quality, going so far as to obscure his face in deep chiaroscuro. At the center of the painting we find an unidentified black man. Watson and the shark occupy the lower third of the canvas – the portion at which eye-level rests. However, given this compositional choice in addition to the scale of the painting, we must note that as we look up at the work the black figure looks back down toward us: his body and head haloed by the rising sun.

Having examined the history of St. Domingue to better aid in the understanding of a history of slavery I then moved into a discussion of representations of slaves from the period. Now, I present to you two paintings by John Singleton Copley – *Watson and the Shark* and *The Death of Major Pierson* – as a liminal point in the representation of blackness. In this section we will see the black slave emerge as hero instead of victim. To be sure, in my interpretation of Copley's work I do not mean to suggest that the mantle of hero comes naturally. Rather, I argue that there are two narratives of slavery at hand in

Watson and the Shark. On the one hand the loyal and devoted man and, on the other, the rebellious man of the wild. Both constructs are indeed overwhelmed by racial sentiments of the time and, in their own ways, each is insidious. By utilizing earlier English paintings and engravings, most notably the work of William Hogarth, I will show how *Watson and the Shark* furthers the aesthetic acculturation of blacks in English paintings of the late eighteenth century. Nonetheless, there will remain a current of social anxiety with regards to the institution of slavery. We will see the shark emerge as an allegorical placeholder for white panic; thus, leaving the image of the black bifurcated. *Watson and the Shark*, therefore, is a stepping stone toward the fully assimilated role of the black servant in painting which we find in *The Death of Major Pierson*. Here, slavery will no longer be a rhetorical point. Instead, superlative loyalty will be seen as a cure to white panic and, thus, the mantle of hero may be placed upon the black body. As it has been over twenty years since the last significant examination of these two paintings I would suggest it is perhaps time to retrieve Copley from the mothballs of art history and bring his painting to bear upon not only his contemporaries in England but France as well. Thus, we will see Copley as a further building block to an ultimate analysis of of Girodet's *Belley*.

Four major works of scholarship exist regarding Copley's first historical composition since moving to England in 1774. Irma Jaffe supposes onto the work a deep religious sentiment, "Realism, after all, had been a primary demand of his American sitters, a demand inculcated by the Puritan Ethic, founded on the laws of nature, which

was God's law."⁸⁵ Her interlocutor being Jules Prown who supposes that this painting is nothing but "cheap sensational pictorial journalism rather than history painting."⁸⁶ While I am inclined to agree with Jaffe that there is more to *Watson and the Shark* than "cheap" appeals to public voyeuristic bloodlust, I am disinclined toward an overt reading of Christianity onto Copley's work simply because the American colonies were Christian. The two political readings of *Watson and the Shark* come from Ann Abrams and Albert Boime. Boime's reading is heavily dependent upon Abrams' as she traces the political ramifications of *Watson and the Shark* from an American perspective. Abrams outlines a cultural narrative that Copley would have been aware of, largely through political cartoons, and concludes that *Watson and the Shark* is actually a tool which we may utilize in a re-examination of American history painting up to and including the American Revolution.⁸⁷ Boime, conversely, provides an account which favors a British perspective. Given that Watson was British, and indeed became Lord Mayor of London shortly after *Watson and the Shark* was painted, and that Copley was a Loyalist who left America to seek his fortune in England, it does seem natural to contextualize *Watson and the Shark* in terms of British politics and reception in 1778. Boime's deployment of Marxist methodology makes use of the biography of Watson in relation to involvement in Tory politics, Watson's own business of providing low quality dried fish for slave food, and

⁸⁵ Irma Jaffe, "John Singleton Copley's 'Watson and the Shark,'" *American Art Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (May, 1977), pp15-25. pp. 17

⁸⁶ Jules Prown, *John Singleton Copley*, 2 Vols., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966. Vol. II. pp. 273.

⁸⁷ Ann Abrams, "Politics, Prints, and John Singleton Copley's *Watson and the Shark*," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (June 1979), pp. 265 - 276. See especially 275-276.

implied pro-slavery beliefs.⁸⁸ Understandably each new argument about *Watson and the Shark* draws from and builds off of the last even if it takes a contrary view. Likewise, I too will be reliant upon Abrams and Boime for some of my historicization in addition to Watson's biography. Yet, what I propose is ultimately a very different reading.

For my purposes I would like to limit discussion to three figures: Watson, the black man, and the shark. Boime has already pointed out the triangular composition in relation to the the triangle trade.⁸⁹ Watson is a self-evident white body and may, in this case, be seen as a placeholder for whites in general; particularly as he is put in bifold juxtaposition to two figures: the black man and the shark. Copley paints Watson's skin as whiter than white; even his pale hair lends an albino quality to Watson's body.

Contrastingly, the shark and the black man constitute dark figures: one friend, one foe. I would like to suggest that these figures are actually two sides of the same coin. The black man may be equated to the political fantasy of the good which slavery does. Boime states, "At one point, Watson could even judge the slave trade to be 'merciful and humane.'"⁹⁰ Ideologues as early as the seventeenth century were busy espousing the supreme justification of slavery as a moral imperative. Slavery, to ministers like William Perkins in England and Samuel Willard in America, limited the idea of slavery to the physical body of the man and mandated the master be responsible for the soul.

Subjugation of men, then, was part of the natural order; however, so was the law of God.

⁸⁸ Albert Boime, *The Art of Exclusion: Representing Blacks in the Nineteenth Century*, Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990. See pages 20 - 36.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Id. at 32.

Masters were seen to be burdened with the responsibility of maintaining the purity of the souls of the men whom they enslaved. Should they fail hell would be the price. In his study of *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, David Davis notes, “We have, then, a view of bondage as reciprocal relationships between loving master and loyal servant, instituted by God for the better ordering of a sinful world.”⁹¹ Profit would of course overshadow religious sensibility, and the Puritan ideals of Perkins and Willard would fall by wayside. Nevertheless, institutional racial hierarchy by then had been established. Employing the notion of the savage who must be tamed as a scapegoat for subhuman treatment, violence, and kidnapping a race of people.⁹²

As we have already seen the barbarous in representation let us now move to the mid-eighteenth century where portrayals of assimilation begins to occur. David Dabydeen wrote *Hogarth's Blacks: Images of Blacks in Eighteenth English Art* in 1987 as a response to the great deal of scholarship on William Hogarth. Dabydeen did not take issue with anything that had been said, rather, he noticed an absence of analysis regarding the black figures in Hogarth's works.⁹³ Dabydeen puts fourth three key ideas which apply to my analysis of *noir*, and which can be particularly brought to bear in relation to

⁹¹ David Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966. pp. 201.

⁹² Further and deliberately misappropriations of religion were applied to the slave trade in regards to “the curse of Ham.” Black Africans were regarded to be the sons of Ham whose skin had been darkened as punishment for their sins. See: Benjamin Braude, “The Sons of Noah and the Construction of Ethnic and Geographical Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods,” *William and Mary Quarterly* LIV (January 1997), pp. 103-142.

⁹³ “Austin Dobson for instance remarks that ‘the chairs and tables, the masks and fans, the swords and cudgels, have all their articulate message in the story; there is a sermon in the dial, a moral in the cobweb, a text in a paper of tobacco.’” See: David Dabydeen, *Hogarth's Blacks: Images of Blacks in Eighteenth Century English Art*, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987. pp. 9.

Copley. First, “By the end of the sixteenth century it had become fashionable for aristocratic families in England to own a black houseboy.”⁹⁴ Working from this phenomenon, Dabydeen continues into a brief discussion of the evolution in English portraiture of servant to pet or secondary pet: “[in relation to Wheatley’s *Family Group*] Even the dog is more a part of the family’s affections than the black, the dog being central not a peripheral detail. In fact blacks and dogs shared the same status in the aristocratic household [...] Sometimes both dog and black are present in the same picture, both gazing respectfully at their owner, as in Dandridge’s *Young Girl with Dog and Negro Attendant*.”⁹⁵ Pierre Mignard’s *Portrait of Louise de Kérouaille, Duchess of Portsmouth* or as she was more commonly, Charles II’s mistress, is a prime example of such treatment. The Duchess is pictured dressed in bold colors. A *fleur de lys* pattern echos throughout her dress: most likely symbolizing her strong attachment to the French court and Louis XIV. Indeed, one can clearly see dangling from her ear a large pearl earring; Louis XIV had given the Duchess a pair of earrings worth eighteen thousands pounds.⁹⁶ Pearls repeat throughout the painting: from the subtle pear clasps on the Duchess’ dress to the whelk shell being used like a candy dish to the dog collar of pearls around her serving girl’s neck, pearls are in excess. If we linger on the young black servant we see that she is indeed being treated more like a doll than as a person. Nonetheless, her rarity and collectability is emphasized by placing red coral in her left and and the treasury of pearls

⁹⁴ Id. at 17.

⁹⁵ Id. at 21-23.

⁹⁶ Eleanor Herman, *Sex with Kings: 500 Years of Adultery, Power, Rivalry, and Revenge*, New York: Harper Collins, 2005. pp.149.

in her right. In today's economy of celebrity signifiers we might go so far as to call the servant a seventeenth century accessory.

High Life Below Stairs, a 1770 English print, shows the inverse of aristocrats and their black servants. Here we see life as more collegial and playful. Artifice, which seems attached to the aristocracy, melts away and all the servants appear to be on equal footing. A housemaid dances with a black servant as a roaring fire burns in fireplace. A one legged man plays the fiddle and other servants look on, joking and laughing with each another. Everyone has a smile on his or her face. In this world the black man has assimilated into the household as servant and confederate. Likewise, in *Watson and the Shark*, the black rescuer is just another sailor trying to save Watson from a terrible fate: this is the dance in which he takes part. Dabydeen observes this type of equalizing in Hogarth's *Captain Lord George Graham in his Cabin*:

The juxtaposition of Lord Graham and the black servant may reveal the difference in social rank but on an aesthetic level it is the similarities between the two figures – the shape of their noses, the smooth, soft texture and round outline of their faces, and their youthful appearance – which emerge. The black colour of the boy throws into relief the fairness of Lord Graham's face, and the fairness of the latter in turn enhances the darkness of the former: there is no question of superiority or inferiority, both are aesthetically equal though different.⁹⁷

The argument present is not one of mere juxtapositions. Hogarth engaged in a dialogue with Joshua Reynolds as to the very nature of aesthetic beauty and whether or not black skin was, or could be seen as, beautiful. Hogarth taking the position that, "the Negro who finds great beauty in the black females of his own country, may find as much deformity

⁹⁷ Op. cit. 44-45.

in the European beauty as we in theirs.”⁹⁸ Reynolds’ view is that Europeans value white skin over black because of the familiarity; likewise, blacks value black over white, “custom makes custom.”⁹⁹ *Watson and the Shark* is deeply reliant on such contrasts of color and the blackness of the man makes his presence among the white men more striking. It is not merely because he is helping to save a white man, by virtue of being in the painting as an equal this black figure aids in transforming eighteenth century visual rhetoric. More to the point, Copley does not go out of his way to apply any degrading aesthetic signifiers onto the black man – such as we saw in the seventeenth century paintings: eyes raised in wonder, tokens of ownership, etc. And, unlike West, there is no participatory division of skin color. Copley allows his figure to engage in the action of the painting as an equal both flawed and upstanding. Likewise, Hogarth, in his typical manner, applies the same treatment to everyone. That having been said, Hogarth’s general *modus operandi* was satire.

Let us shift away from the harmonious life in *High Life Below Stairs* and *Captain Lord George Graham in his Cabin* now and move onto the overcrowded streets of London where Hogarth is always at his most acerbic. Dabydeen concludes his study of blacks in Hogarth with the notion of savagery: the question of which social class is the more savage and a challenge to the term itself. While Hogarth tends to moralize to the poor about social vice, his works serve as a warning as much as anything. The elite

⁹⁸ As quoted in Dabydeen 41. In his *Analysis of Beauty*, Hogarth further states, “It is well know, the fair young girl, the brown old man, and the negro; nay, all mankind, have the same appearance, and are alike disagreeable to the eye, when the upper skin is taken away.” see William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty: With a View of Fixing the Fluctuating Ideas of Taste*, London: R. Scholey, 1810. pp. 92.

⁹⁹ Joshua Reynolds, *The Idler in Two Volumes*, Vol. II, London: Newbery, 1761. pp. 169.

generally fair far worse and are often depicted as irredeemably corrupt, and this holds true both of those possessing old money or the *nouveau riche*. One of Hogarth's typical parodies of the social classes is to draw the superfluous rich figures as squatty and toad-like. In some cases, such as *Industry and Idleness*, this can be seen to serve as a warning to Francis Goodchild as he advances socially. If we look to plate eight of the series *The Industrious 'Prentice grown rich, and Sheriff of London* we see the beginnings of a horrible transformation of the once "normal" looking loom worker into one of the gorging upperclass masses. Dabydeen writes:

The poor people who come literally cap in hand are barred from entrance to the extravagant feast [...] Further down the table is a clergyman whose appetite for material things further indicates the absence of Christian values. The black man contributes to the overall satire [...] he serves the grotesque diners who in their gluttony stab at their meat and gnaw their bones like cannibals at an orgy. Hogarth uses the black man who literally and figuratively looks down upon the white flesh-eaters to ask the questions: who is the savage and who is civilized, who the cannibal and who the Christian? [...] Hogarth must have known that [...] a fear of being eaten by their white captors and masters was a real one to blacks on being herded into slave ships off the coast of Africa and on being unloaded on strange West Indian soil.¹⁰⁰

It is two priests whom the black servant stands over while delivering a drink to another man; presumably the beverage on his small tray is the same as the one being chugged down by the priest to his immediate right. Much disgusting detail is given to noblemen in the foreground of *The Industrious 'Prentice grown rich, and Sheriff of London* which makes the indiscernible features of the black man more apparent. The lack of definition removes him in many ways from the scene and makes certain that he is not implicated.

¹⁰⁰ Dabydeen 61-62.

Whereas, the viewer is drawn to Francis Goodchild by the sword placed to his right and his thrown-like chair. Again, those around him serve as a warning for the potential of gluttony and frittering even in the case of hard work. There are very few happy endings in Hogarth even for the moral and righteous.

Earlier in this section I discussed some of the religious justifications of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for slavery. Let me conclude my discussion of Hogarth with *Four Times of Day: Noon*, a lampoon of aristocratic religious life in London life. Hog Lane. The familiar sight of St. Giles is in the background.¹⁰¹ Wealthy Huguenots leave their church. A gutter, complete with the carcass of a cat, whose body is somewhere between rigor mortis and decomposition, divides the scene. In the foreground there are two units of three: man, woman, and child. The upper-class man bears a strong resemblance to the dancing master in plate two of Hogarth's *A Rakes Progress*. Hogarth's depiction of the French Style as grotesque and clownish alludes to his own cultural xenophobia. He may mock the English but he despises continental Europeans.¹⁰² In typical Hogarth fashion the aristocratic family comes across far worse than the lower-class grouping. Between the outlandish and cumbersome clothing and the bizarre manner in which the husband walks one wonders how this family manages to get anywhere. A compositional move makes the man's right arm extend where his wife's should appear. This conjoint quality adds to the overall effete affectation by the man and furthers Hogarth's critique. One can almost smell the wig powder and perfume he is undoubtedly

¹⁰¹ St. Giles also appears in *Gin Lane* and *First Stage of Cruelty*.

¹⁰² Again, in the plate of *A Rake's Progress* not only are the French despised but the Germans as well. French men, though, are lent a striking degree of effeminacy.

wearing. He pinches his left thumb and index finger together while his wrist is looped by an unused, thin cane. As he is meant to be the counterpoint to the black man, the gesture of pinching is the perfect place for contrast. Whereas the upper-class man pinches at nothing, the black man fondles the white serving woman and pinches her nipples. The theatrical appearance given to the rich French couple almost voids them of any hint of sexuality: save the porcine offspring at their feet admiring his own reflection; he is mirrored by the petulant boy who has spilled his food and the animalistic woman eating it from the ground. Antithetically, the black and white couple appear to receive great pleasure from their sexual relationship. Her face appears flush with pleasure; her cheeks are a natural red; whereas, her counterpart must paint perfect rouge circles upon her face. One also cannot help but notice the largeness of the hole in serving girl's pie and that a very semen-like substance is pouring out.¹⁰³ *Four Times of Day* leaves us concluding there is more happiness to be found in the lower-classes where assimilation has happened and in a state of repugnance with the veneer of the upper-class.

Hogarth's works are particularly important when considering Copley's *Watson and the Shark* as well as *The Death of Major Pierson*. From Hogarth we can glean varying ways in which black figures began to enter not only painting but English society as well. Remembering always that in *Watson and the Shark* we see a communal effort in terms of saving Watson. As per aesthetic hierarchy there is no placement of white above black. Indeed, white and black work in tandem – white stabs at the shark while black throws the vital lifeline. Meanwhile, seven other white men struggle to be resourceful and

¹⁰³ In this manner Hogarth reminds us of Greuze's various girls with broken pitchers.

two are merely spectators. Boime suggests that, “Watson still maintains his hold over the black, who ‘serves’ him the rope. That is, the black rescuer remains ‘mastered’ by Watson despite the reversal (in the “traditional hierarchical relationship of white and black).”¹⁰⁴ Boime’s argument presuppose a relationship between Watson and the black man that there is no visual evidence to support. What mastery could an orphaned drowning victim of a shark attack hold over anyone? Indeed, sartorially there is no indication of any pictured man being higher in station than his fellow rescuers. Servitude can be implied upon the black man in terms of proximity of location – his body is in the West Indies – and that the year of the setting is 1749. However, there is no indication given by Copley that this figure is a servant to anyone aboard the rowboat, least of all to Watson. Thus, while it is fair for one to assume that the black man is a servant, I feel that it is folly to definitively state that he serves anyone in the painting. His body is a visual echo of the black figure in *Captain Lord George Graham in his Cabin* where, as we have seen, the visual rhetoric of servitude lessens in relation to the aesthetic contrast of skin. As the man stabbing the shark is blackened by shadow the emphasis on black and white comes from comparing the black man to Watson. For his part Watson is nude, reminding us of the final plate of *A Rake’s Progress* where Hogarth places his antihero in an asylum and nude. In terms of Hogarth and Copley the presentation of the nude, then, is of the broken (white) man. Watson has lost his right leg; the rake has lost everything including his mind. To be sure, Watson will rise quite a ways in his station; however, as per the narrative of *Watson and the Shark* he is nothing.

¹⁰⁴ Boime 35.

In a final parallel to Hogarth, Copley will likewise be very interested in engravings being made of his paintings. Hogarth certainly made an excellent living with engraved serializations and Copley was well aware of the money at stake if the English and international communities took interest in one's work.¹⁰⁵ Copley's predisposition toward engraving came at an early age. Peter Pelham, Copley's stepfather, was a well respected engraver in Boston. One might imagine that, as Copley had no great master to learn from in America, prints and engravings were invaluable to the young artist. And, as I have already said, Copley would use engravings to his advantage when constructing the background for *Watson and the Shark*.¹⁰⁶ Thus, we can surmise that Copley had a better understanding than most about the effectiveness of engravings and their potential for financial gain. We may even suspect that, when designing his compositions, Copley was considering their translation into engraving.

Louis Masur writes of Copley's decision to relocate, "Much as he desired fame, he would not pursue it to the detriment of comfortable living [...] To live in England as his social status dictated, his income of three hundred guineas per year would most likely have to be tripled."¹⁰⁷ Indeed, when Copley set up in London he used his American roots to his advantage. Emily Neff writes:

¹⁰⁵ Hogarth was one of the chief proponents of the Engraving Copyright Act of 1734 (8 Geo. 2 c.13); so much so that it was sometimes referred to as "Hogarth's Act."

¹⁰⁶ In terms of history painting this is truly innovative. If we examine French history painting from the same time little care is given to background; rather, they are hodgepodes of antiquity.

¹⁰⁷ Louis Masur, "Reading *Watson and the Shark*," *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 67, No. 3 (September 1994), pp. 427-454. pp. 433. As a point of reference, 300 guineas would have been worth about 18,900 pounds today; thus, 900 guineas would be worth 56,700 pounds.

Both West and Copley, once abroad, included either Native Americans – as in West’s *Death of General Wolfe* – or blacks – as in Copley’s *Watson and the Shark* – in their history paintings as references to help identify the distant lands considered so appealing and so essential to British prosperity. If it served them, being American could have primitive or exotic associations advantageous to an artist eager to practice his profession in new surroundings. More than that, by making reference to colonial outposts, the source of new English wealth but also contention, both artists played on England’s image of itself as a world power.¹⁰⁸

Thus, in Copley we see a man eager for pecuniary success as well as artistic. With the help of Benjamin West and Joshua Reynolds realization of these goals did not take long. Having left for England in 1774, *Watson and the Shark* was displayed in 1778 and almost certainly came as the result of a direct commission by Brook Watson himself; the following year acclaimed engraver Valentine Green helped to make the image available to the world.¹⁰⁹ Deploying “primitive and exotic associations” certainly seems to have worked out.

With regard to the style of painting Benjamin West’s *Death of General Wolfe* had broken the mold of traditional history painting – history painting, of course, being regarded as the highest form of painting both in England and in France. Both the scale of the painting and the import of its subject matter qualified West’s work for this distinction. Choosing to place his figures in the dress of the day and not have General Wolfe as a heroic nude is where tradition was broken. Nonetheless the painting was a tremendous success and, as we shall see later, would have international aesthetic influence. *Watson and the Shark* certainly follows in this vein. The figures are in contemporary clothes save

¹⁰⁸ Emily Neff, *John Singleton Copley in England*, London: Merrell Holberton, 1995. pp. 21

¹⁰⁹ It should be noted as well that in the interim of four years Copley completed his Grand Tour and was not in England for much of the time leading up to the production of *Watson and the Shark*.

for Watson's nudity. Men did swim in the nude at sea and in lakes in the eighteenth century but the more common practice was to swim in one's drawers. It could be argued that adding drawers would have been even more contemporary than implying the idea of the heroic nude onto Watson's body. In his tome-like study of the representation of blacks in art Hugh Honour writes, "In Copley's picture Watson himself is posed with arms and legs in correct contrapposto, like an antique statue."¹¹⁰ Likewise, Jaffe finds:

The nudity of Brook Watson, in context, takes on heightened interest. Almost always a viewer seeing this painting for the first time is curious about the youth being nude, and the usual explanation is the naturalistic one – that he was swimming nude in the early dawn. But such a simple view ignores the extensive iconography of nudity in the history of western art [...] Watson's pose also captures our attention. It has been claimed that his figure is based on the *Borghese Warrior* [... however,] The iconography of the *Laocoön* would have been more suitable for Copley's magery – the Trojan priest struggling in the coils of a monster emerged from the sea.¹¹¹

Proximity to Copley's study in Rome, post his 1774 move, in addition to his admiration and friendship with West may have had a great deal to do with the overall visual composition. It is also fair to conclude that Jaffe and Boime need Watson's body to indicate the heroic nude. Jaffe's argument requires nudity for religious purposes and Boime to elevate the white body over the black. For argument's sake, let us assume that Copley was more interested in painting a historical moment than ideas of the classical nude. After all, nudity never really enters into Copley's aesthetic in any other work. In point of fact, Copley's 1781 *The Death of the Earl of Chatham* is awash in yards of

¹¹⁰ Hugh Honour, *The Image of the Black in Western Art Vol. IV Pat I*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989. pp. 38

¹¹¹ Jaffe 19.

fabric. History painting, for Copley, seems to rely on fact more than aesthetic theory. We see that in the restructuring of *Watson and the Shark* to include a black man where originally he had placed a white man is a technique repeated in *The Death of Major Pierson*.

In terms of the black figure in *Watson and the Shark*, then, we may see his action as immediate and quick thinking and not as servitude as Boime suggests. The black figure's right arm and hand are still extended from where he has thrown the rope to Watson seeing that the efforts by three white men to pull in the boy are failing. He represents idealized qualities – calmness under pressure, resourcefulness, and helpfulness – as opposed to previous renderings of blacks in painting. Moreover, in an evolution away from Hogarth as well as other painters, Copley's figure comes across as fully realized and a multi-dimensional person. He has responded to a cry for help with these other individuals – this marks his assimilation into the group as a whole and assimilation is where his loyalty comes from. Throwing a rope is not, per se, a heroic act but then neither is stabbing a shark with a boat hook – no one seems eager to jump into the water to save Watson. Rather, this is the black body in transition to hero, a quality which will be revealed in *The Death of Major Pierson*. Nonetheless, he parallels historical partnerships of blacks and whites which we have seen with regard to St. Domingue and the American Revolution. Again, Copley presents us with an idealized black man who saves a white Englishman.

Circling below the overcrowded rowboat is another fantasy. A monstrous shark with yellow eyes and rows of razor sharp teeth, seemingly poised to chomp off Watson's

panicked head. Having discussed the black figure on the rowboat as an allegory for positive relationships between whites and blacks I would like to now suggest that the shark is representative of negative relationships. Having read Gros' account of captivity in St. Domingue let us shift the journey closer to Africa and the original capture and enslavement of blacks. There are many different iterations of white panic. Given the obvious proximity to the sea I would like to explore the idea of the shark as allegory for slave uprisings aboard ship. David Richardson has shown that post 1750 the international rise in demand for slaves pushed slavers into new territory which markedly increased the number of slave revolts, "The incidence of slave rebellions on ships leaving Senegambia was [...] substantially higher than on ships leaving Sierra Leone and the Windward Coast."¹¹² In documenting the history of slave revolts aboard ship Richardson notes, "Of the 392 insurrections, 353 (90 percent) took place in the period from 1698 to 1807."¹¹³ Obvious tension existed upon slave ships where suicide was not uncommon. These deaths only further exacerbated strain between captives and captors.

Scottish poet James Thomson wrote in the early part of the eighteenth century about the experience aboard a slave ship:

For many a day, and many a dreadful night,
 Incessant, lab'ring round the stormy Cape;
 By bold ambitious led, and bolder thirst
 Of gold. For then from ancient gloom emerg'd
 The rising world of trade: the genius, then,
 Of navigation, that, in hopeless sloth,
 Had slumber'd on the vast Atlantic deep

¹¹² David Richardson, "Shipboard Revolts, African Authority, and the Atlantic Slave Trade," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 5, No. 1 (January 2001), pp. 69-92. pp. 82.

¹¹³ *Id.* at 72.

For idle ages, starting, heard at last
 The Lusitanian prince;¹¹⁴ who, Heav'n inspir'd,
 To love of useful glory rous'd mankind,
 And in unbound commerce mix'd the world.
 Increasing still the terrors of these storms,
 His jaws horrific arm'd with threefold fate,
 Here dwells the direful shark. Lur'd by the scent
 Of streaming crowds, of rank disease, and death,
 Behold! he rushing cuts the briny flood,
 Swift as the gale can bear the ship along;
 And from the partners of that cruel trade
 Which spoils unhappy Guinea and of her sons,
 Demands his share of prey; demands themselves.
 The story fates descend; one death involves
 Tyrants and slaves; when straight, their mangled limbs
 Crashing at once, he dyes the purple seas
 With gore, and and riots in the vengeful meal.¹¹⁵

Cruelty and nature often resulted in at least one death during the transatlantic passage.

Sailors and slaves alike were thrown overboard if they died during passage, thus, turning them into shark food. Moreover, the most common form of suicide was to jump from the ship, thus, dying from shark attacks. We must recognize that sharks and the slave trade have always been linked. Marcus Rediker writes, “‘Shark’ thus seems to have entered the English language through the talk of slave-trade sailors, who may have picked up and adapted the word ‘xoc,’ pronounced ‘choke,’ from the Maya in the Caribbean.”¹¹⁶

Rediker goes on to indicate, “Slave ships sailing toward Africa began to encounter big sharks around the Madeira and Canary Islands, and then with greater frequency near

¹¹⁴ The third son of John the First, king of Portugal.

¹¹⁵ James Thomson, “Summer,” *The Seasons and Castle of Indolence*, London: Scott Webster, 1842. pp. 68-69.

¹¹⁶ Marcus Rediker, “History From Below the Water Line: Sharks and the Atlantic Slave Trade,” *Atlantic Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (September 2008), pp. 285-297. pp. 286.

Cape Verde Islands and Senegambia.”¹¹⁷ We have already linked Senegambia to a greater frequency of slave revolts and now we may further link this slave outpost to prodigious shivers of sharks. Certainly, then, we can come to the conclusion that slave bodies were thrown to the sharks as a result of fatalities during uprisings. Moreover, and what can be seen as cruel irony in terms of *Watson and the Shark*, is that sharks would take to following ships as both a source of shelter and food.¹¹⁸ Thus, the shark that came into Havana Harbor and attacked Watson very well could have been drawn there by a slave ship.

Now that we have linked the slave trade to sharks, *Watson and the Shark* begins to take on a deeper meaning. Again, though, I wish to not only establish the allegorical significance of sharks and the slave trade but also white panic and slave revolts. And, again, “Concentration of slave revolts and other acts of violence was especially noticeable from 1751 to 1775.”¹¹⁹ This time frame directly corresponding to 1749, when the attack on Watson took place, and 1778, when Copley completed his painting. Presuming that passage from Africa to trade ports or the new world was successful there was always the possibility of revolt on shore; most notably of course in St. Domingue in 1791. Nonetheless, the sea remains ever present in association with representations of slavery. When we come to *Belley* we will note that the sea is the background of Girodet’s painting.

¹¹⁷ Id. at 287.

¹¹⁸ Id. at 291-291.

¹¹⁹ Richardson 77.

Projecting a few years into the future, then, we see another English fantasy in regards to African revenge: Fuseli's 1806 *The Negro's Revenge*.¹²⁰ Fuseli's black man is a towering figure of extreme dominance. He is presented here nearly nude: a monolith of black and green. His face is impossible to discern. Plucked from her sleep a white woman is dragged to the craggy edge of doom. Lightning and waves crash in a cacophony muffling the woman's screams. In the right corner of the painting another woman, this time black, looks on. An inversion of the myth of Sappho, this white woman will not leap willingly from the high cliffs into the sea. No. Her death will be the product of hatred and retribution. We can find many parallels between Fuseli's work and Copley's. The sea becomes a place of danger and terror in both calm and storm. The black man and the shark are forces of nature; in the end they are uncontrollable and prone to attack – as we have seen, though, white brutality was far more common and likely than slave attacks on whites. Olaudah Equiano wrote that upon being captured he feared that the white men were cannibals:

I was now persuaded that I had got into a world of bad spirits, and they were going to kill me. Their complexions too differing so much from ours, their long hair, and the language they spoke, which was very different from any I had ever heard, united to confirm in me this belief. Indeed, such were the horrors of my views and fears at the moment, that, if ten thousand worlds had been my own, I would have freely parted with them all to have exchanged my condition with that meanest slave in my own country. When I looked round the ship too, and saw a large furnace or copper boiling, and a multitude of black people of every description chained together, every one of their countenances expressing dejection and sorrow, I no longer doubted my fate, and quite overpowered with horror and anguish, I fell motionless on the deck and fainted. When I

¹²⁰ I am purposefully not including Turner's *Slave Ship* in this study in order to narrow in upon a specific time frame. Fuseli's work corresponds to Ingres' portrait of Napoleon.

recovered a little, I found some black people about me [...] I asked them if we were not to be eaten by those white men with the horrible looks, red faces, and long hair.¹²¹

Equiano would further go on to describe the horrors of being wracked and “unmercifully” whipped for any offense aboard ship but especially for preferring, “death to slavery.”¹²² Cultural anxiety on the part of whites appears to have had more to do with the fear of in kind retribution as illustrated in both *Abolition of the Slave Trade, or The Man and the Master* and *An Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti*. Thus, in terms of the shark in *Watson and the Shark*, we see a generational fear of slavery, the young being attacked, with no solution given. An appeasement is made – the white man’s leg – but the shark is not defeated. Instead, it continues to circle the West Indies ready to consume its next victim.

Copley shifts the artistic dialogue radically between 1778 and 1782. Certainly his relationship to both England and America can be seen to bookend the two paintings within the time frame of the American Revolution: 1775-1783. Furthermore, the subject of *The Death of Major Pierson* is directly related to the American Revolution. Judiciously reframing current events, Copley opted to paint a minor skirmish against the French on the island of Jersey. And, indeed, *The Death of Major Pierson* does record a British victory in the waning days of the war they would eventually lose. Richard Saunders notes that, “Copley, nevertheless, sensed the national appeal of even a modest military victory. British military successes of the preceding five years had been few. Defeat in the

¹²¹ Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, New York: Modern Library, 2004. pp. 34-35.

¹²² Id. at 39.

American colonies was imminent. Pierson's sacrifice might act as a tonic for national spirits, which were at a particular low ebb."¹²³ Saunders goes on to indicate Copley's "modification" of history for "social and political reasonings" in addition to Copley's own fiduciary desires: "if Copley was to have his painting serve as the epitome of English noble sacrifice, and he wished thousands of Englishmen to buy the print published after it, it could not be diluted with Scottish overtones [...] Copley did not rewrite history so much as rearrange it."¹²⁴ Indeed, there is an overwhelming presence of English patriotism in *The Death of Major Pierson* outside of the main action of death. Two British flags intermingle amidst the smoke of battle and dominate the center of the painting. British redcoats swarm in the foreground. A fallen British drummer struggles with his last breaths to salute his slain commander.

We should approach *The Death of Major Pierson* as two forms of propaganda. First, it shows the aforementioned military victory over the French and strongly allies Copley with the English even though he is technically American. Again we look to Saunders to find, "Copley correctly gauged the artistic potential for transforming a minor military skirmish into a major political statement. To do this he orchestrated the event in ways that would enhance its public consumption. Copley then can be seen as an artist sensitive to British social currents."¹²⁵ and, second, it shows the acculturated black sans

¹²³ Richard Saunders, "Genius and Glory: John Singleton Copley's 'The Death of Major Pierson,'" *American Art Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Autumn, 1990), pp. 4-39. pp. 11.

¹²⁴ Id. at 31. With regard to diminishing the role of the Scots it is fascinating to see that, even as defeat appears certain for the English, Copley is very much invested in his own personal assimilation into English society.

¹²⁵ Id. at 36.

critique or worry with regards to slavery. To an extent this makes the painting regressive both in terms of representations of blacks and Copley's own oeuvre. We can easily find thematic likenesses in Agostino Brunais' 1770 *Scene with Dancing in the West Indies* which also seeks to depict blacks, "neither as pathetic victims of oppression nor as bestial creatures intermediate between orangutans and human beings [...] Brunia's image lent support to the contention of plantation owners that most slaves were kindly treated, contented, and better situated than their relatives in Africa and even the poor in Europe."¹²⁶ A similarly dressed black man is featured in both Copley and Brunia, his status ambiguously situated between freeman and servant. Essential to each painting is the apparent loyalty to a white. Not only is the servant fighting, he instantly avenges his master's death by shooting down the French sharpshooter whose death is featured in the background and inverts the group surrounding Pierson. To this end, the black figure further serves as an antidote to blacks in St. Domingue and other French colonies receiving freedom for fighting the British in the American Revolution. To his great credit Copley does not critique his black figure either here or in *Watson and the Shark*. Instead, he strives to paint a man, like any other.

Compositionally there are great similarities between *The Death of Major Pierson* and *Watson and the Shark*. Again, however, unlike the latter there is no onus of fear, defeat, or slavery. Instead, the viewer is given duality of heroism: the white Major Pierson and the black servant. Pierson is shown much like Watson and, indeed, even seems to float as a sea of soldiers who prevent his body from touching the ground.

¹²⁶ Honour 32-33.

Obvious correlations can be made between Pierson's body and various depositions of Christ. Moreover, Pierson represents Britain not only in battle – as the cowardly Lieutenant Governor, Moses Corbet, was prepared to surrender the island – but equally as potent a symbol as the British flags flying over his body. And, like those flags, Pierson's body must not be allowed to touch the ground: to do so would be profane. The white body, in this case, is not nude like Watson. I will not belabor the obvious comparison between Copley's Major Pierson and West's General Wolfe. What we have, however, is a clothed body acting in the place of the heroic nude, in terms of history painting, in both Copley and West. This speaks to my earlier point about *Watson and the Shark* that nudity is simply coincidental. There is, as I have said, nothing heroic about Watson. Pierson, however, rallied his men to victory, and though he himself would not survive the battle his actions at the time and to this day on the island of Jersey are seen as heroic and valorous. What is fascinating is that the black servant in the case of *The Death of Major Pierson* supplants the the white man spearing the shark. Heroism is manifold and in certain ways still racial. Pierson's white, English blood is the sacrifice, and this corresponds to *Watson and the Shark*. However, as Copley has removed the negative elements of slavery in terms of the black figure in *The Death of Major Pierson* the sacrifice is more typical of history painting: Pierson has died fighting a known and seeable cause, not an abstract idea. Not only does this make *Watson and the Shark* more singular, in terms of genre, the new compositional structure found in *The Death of Major Pierson* solidifies the shift in academic history painting.

After the successes of *Watson and the Shark* and *The Death of the Earl of Chatham*, Copley's reputation was on strong footing. Still, Copley had trouble securing government commissions. Both Major Pierson's and the Earl of Chatham's deaths were to be memorialized by sculptor John Bacon, even though Copley had applied and submitted designs. Nonetheless, a private commission came through for *The Death of Major Pierson*: John Boydell paid £800 to Copley for the piece. On his decision to work on current events as history paintings Copley said, "that modern subjects are the properest for exercising of the pencil and far more interesting to the present Age than those taken from Ancient History."¹²⁷ But why feature a black man so centrally in the painting? True, a black servant was present and vital to the moment; however, we have already seen, in terms of the missing Scots in *The Death of Major Pierson*, that Copley was not opposed to allowing his image supremacy in terms of the visual field. I do not mean to suggest in anyway that Copley's aim was political. Instead, I return to my original thesis that the black man stands out so much to us, as Hogarth would agree, because he is different. By analyzing the group surrounding the body of the fallen major we see many figures all of similar proportion. There is a degree of visual banality resulting from the British redcoat uniforms. However, if we look to Major Pierson's right leg we see two Englishmen dressed the same as the servant. These two uniforms further break up the red monotone – I would conclude that if the black servant were wearing red he would, in fact, stand out less. Because he is in blue we may naturally link him to the navy; I will likewise make this comparison when discussing *Belley*. By virtue of being on

¹²⁷ Prown, vol. 2, p. 297. See also Saunders 11.

an island, which was no less attacked to weaken the British navy than to help the American cause, the Navy and the sea should be present. However, without the use of naval uniforms the painting would lose some of its signifiers.

The black figure is then afforded the *coup de grâs* moment as he strikes down the Frenchman on January 6, 1781. However, he is merely part of an extraordinary unit of patriotic men. Like the men in *Watson and the Shark* this group too works toward one singular purpose. Major Pierson was hit. His body fallen. The cause could not end with his life and so the troops pushed on. Copley presents us with the appraisal moment of the battle. We see the fallen leader and we see the fight must continue. Though the black figure is known historically to be a servant there are no indications given: just as in *Watson and the Shark*. And this is necessary for the process of assimilation to be complete. With the encumbrance of slavery or even black servitude removed from the narrative of the painting, and the historical fluidity preserved, Copley is able to heroize the black man by allowing him acculturation into the English unit.

“From Slave to Muscadin”

Jean-Baptiste Belley arrived in Paris with Louis Dufay and Jean-Baptiste Mills as representatives from the colony of St. Domingue in late January of 1794. Sonthonax had arranged for these three men to not only represent St. Domingue but to be the embodiment of emancipation itself.¹²⁸ France, though teeming with rhetoric of liberty and freedom, was not necessarily hospitable to the cause of abolition. In December of 1793

¹²⁸ Dufay and Belley had been central figures in the downfall of General Galbaud.

the *Amis des Noirs* had been systematically destroyed with the majority of the *Amis* having either been imprisoned or guillotined. Colonial Jacobins who resented Sonthonax were the source of these persecutions. Shortly after the men arrived in Paris, Belley, Dufay, and Mills were interrogated in their apartments. Dufay and Mills were arrested and briefly imprisoned.¹²⁹ And, yet, in spite of these initial tribulations, 15 pluviôse An II (February 3, 1794) marked the attendance of the delegation from St. Domingue to the National Convention. As Belley, Dufay, and Mills waited in the antechamber, the Chairman of the Committee on Decrees certified the men's credentials and motioned for their admission. Citizen Camboulas spoke, "Since 1789 the aristocracy of birth and the aristocracy of religion have been destroyed; but the aristocracy of the skin still remains."¹³⁰ For over a year the French Republic had been receiving biased information from the pro-slavery contingent. Pierre-François Page and Augustin-Jean Brulley, both white plantation owners from St. Domingue, had been in direct opposition to the policies of Sonthonax and Polverel, and had championed the cause of those with a vested interest in slavery.¹³¹ Now, however, thanks to personal support from Danton and the deputy Jean-François Delacroix, the will of "aristocratic colonists" had been overruled. Belley, Dufay, and Mills marched proudly into the Convention chamber to thunderous

¹²⁹ Belley represented free black men, Dufay represented the whites of the colony, and Mills represented the mulattos. Popkin gives a full account of the arrest of Dufay and Mills noting that Belley was not arrested because they had the wrong information on who the black delegate was supposed to be. See page 327 in *You Are All Free*.

¹³⁰ "Moniteur Officiel." séance du 16 Pluviôse, An II. as quoted in *The French Revolution in San Domingo*, Lothrop Stoddard, also see James, *Black Jacobins*, 139-40.

¹³¹ See Popkin 329-330 and 351-354.

applause.¹³² After each man received an embrace from the President of the Convention, Belley, “delivered a long and fiery oration, pledging the blacks to the cause of the revolution and asking the Convention to declare slavery abolished.”¹³³ Following Belley’s speech, Levasseur moved for the correction of the French constitution to abolish slavery and it was so carried – in a rare move during the Terror without “guidance” from the Committee of Public Safety. Forevermore Belley would be linked to the French anti-slavery movement and, indeed, to the Revolution itself in no small part thanks to portrait by Anne-Louis Girodet.

Having already traced the origins of French St. Domingue and French colonial slavery as well as the emergence and shifting nature of black figures in paintings and engravings from America, England, and France let us now examine the details of the life of Jean-Baptiste Belley and contextualize them within the scope of Girodet’s portrait. In this analysis we will find that Girodet produces not only a thoughtful study of a man, but the complete life history of a once slave, soldier, delegate, and free Frenchman. These qualities will allow us to see *Belley* as a penultimate aesthetic moment in eighteenth century painting with regard to the black figure as assimilated and cosmopolitan. Girodet’s portrait, therefore, relies on a pedigree of painters in addition to artistic styles, fashion, and social thought from continental Europe, America, and England which all converge in a single instant upon his canvas. A great cultural spasm occurred over a

¹³² For a full account of the day see the very detailed narrative by Yves Bénot, “Comment la Convention a-t-elle voté l’abolition de l’esclavage en l’an II?,” *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, No. 293-294 (1993), pp. 349-61. In this account it is noted that none of the eleven member from the Committee of Public Safety were present including Robespierre.

¹³³ C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins*, New York: Vintage Books, 1963. pp. 140.

relatively short period of time in the eighteenth century which allowed for Girodet to create *Belley*.

Gorée, the island of slaves, was the birth place of Jean-Baptiste Belley in 1747. Another tiny islet serving as a base for what would be called a “peculiar institution” by citizens of the United States of America once they themselves had declared independence from British rule. Gorée, like most island colonies, traded hands many times between European powers who participated in the *commerce triangulaire*. French exportation of slaves to the West Indies needed bases such as Gorée for stocking necessities for the voyage as well as ship maintenance. Thus, the population on Gorée would swell sometimes from a few hundred to over 2,000.¹³⁴ As I discussed at the beginning of this part St. Domingue was the major slave depot for the French not only for plantation owners living in the colony, but for sale to the Americas as well. And, as we have seen, the French relationship with slavery was made doubly complex by successful slave revolts as well as the French Revolution of 1789. Girodet’s portrait of Belley was painted during a rare moment of relative peace in St. Domingue, but war with England and the local dominance of figures like Toussaint Louverture would ensure that there would always be turmoil in that region of the world as long as France was involved. General Laveaux wrote about the rise of Louverture and the situation within the colony in 1796, “An abominable jealousy exists here among the *gens de couleur* against the whites and blacks [...] The *gens de couleur* are in despair at seeing Toussiant Louverture, a *noir*, become a brigadier general [...] All the *gens de couleur* and black *affranchis* are the

¹³⁴ The island’s size is a mere 3,000 feet in length and 1,160 feet in length.

enemies of emancipation.”¹³⁵ Turbulence would exist in colonial St. Domingue until January 1, 1804, when *l’Isle d’Hayti* would finally become free and independent.

During Belley’s time in France as a delegate to the convention representing St. Domingue, Étienne Maynaud Bizefranc de Laveaux, the successor of Sonthonax in St. Domingue, had encouraged the growth of a black military force.¹³⁶ In 1794 Laveaux found himself trapped in Port de Paix. British and Spanish troops seem poised to finally upset the balance of military power in St. Domingue.¹³⁷ However, the British made an unforced error by trying to bribe Laveaux with 50,000 *écus* to become a turncoat believing that Laveaux would seize upon the opportunity and, as a former noble, abandon Jacobin France. The British command, Colonel Whitelocke, felt confident in the move. No one on the British side could have anticipated Laveaux’s response. Instead of accepting the British terms Laveaux challenged Whitelocke to a duel. Laveaux believed that his honor had been called into question as he would never abandon his “brothers” and he wanted satisfaction. Whitelocke declined.¹³⁸

Laveaux would form a strong alliance with Toussaint Louverture. On May 5, 1794, Laveaux wrote to Louverture in order to share the news that emancipation had reached Guadeloupe and now the French flag was flying over Terre Neuve and Port à

¹³⁵ As quoted in Heintz, 72.

¹³⁶ Louverture to Governor Laveaux as “the good father of us all.” See: Victor Schoelcher, *Vie de Toussaint Louverture*, Paris: Karthala, 1982. pp. 137.

¹³⁷ See C. L. R. James, 143. “The fate of the French in San Domingo was hanging by a thread.”

¹³⁸ See Madison Smart Bell, *Toussaint Louverture: A Biography*, New York: Pantheon, 2007. pp. 98. “It is an outrage for which you owe me personal satisfaction; I demand it in the name of the honor which must exist among nations. In consequence, before there should be general engagement, I offer you single combat, up to the point that one of us falls. I leave you the choice of arms, be it on horseback or afoot.”

Piment. In his letter Laveaux also stated that he had been informed that Louverture was fighting for the Republican cause and, as such, had captured Gonaïves.¹³⁹ Letters between Laveaux and Louverture from 1794 to 1798 are plentiful, a fact made more astonishing when one considers that, while Louverture could speak both Creole and French, he spelled French words phonetically. Thus, Louverture always dictated his correspondence to various secretaries over the years. Laveaux acknowledged both the political and military importance of Louverture by making him a Brigadier General.

Allies in France like Louis Dufay had entrusted the future of their plantations to Louverture; Dufay even offered to adopt Louverture's children so they could be educated in France.¹⁴⁰ Racial and class differences within the colony led to prolonged infighting: a situation which was exacerbated by massive British forces sent to the Lesser Antilles between 1796 and 1800.¹⁴¹ Jean Baptiste Belley's own local involvement in St. Domingue as a freed black came to its apex in 1793. Serving under General Galbaud, Belley was an infantry captain who fought against slave insurrections. In September of that same year he was elected as a representative to the National Convention in Paris. By the time Girodet was painting and showing his *Belley* the real Belley had left France and was serving as *chef de la gendarmerie de St. Domingue*.¹⁴² In 1796 Louverture had

¹³⁹ For a full account of the correspondence between Laveaux and Louverture see Pierre Pluchon, *Toussaint Louverture: un révolutionnaire noir d'Ancien Régime*, Paris: Fayard, 1989. pp. 105.

¹⁴⁰ I would here point out the historical parallelism of Napoleon's education due to political connections in France and the offer made by Dufay to Louverture. The letters between Dufay and Louverture are housed in the Schomberg Center for Research in Black Culture at the New York Public Library.

¹⁴¹ 10,000 British reinforcements arrived in 1796 alone.

¹⁴² Details on Belley's life, especially post-Revolution, are scarce. One excellent source, though is: Auguste Kuscinski, *Les Députés au Corps législatif, Conseil des Cinq-Cents, Conseil des Anciens de l'an V à l'an VI*, Paris: Au Siège de la Société, 1905.

proven himself a superb military leader and by the close of the year Sonthonax, Lauveaux, and Louverture were the three most powerful men in St. Domingue. However, it was not Louverture who Girodet chose to paint. Instead, Belley became the painterly subject while Louverture's notoriety would be more vividly recorded by history.

Artistically Louverture was rather short changed. Honour notes, "The absence of any authentic portrait from the life of Toussaint Louverture is remarkable. Nor do any of the later and imaginary images of him have the moving effect of Wordsworth's sonnet."¹⁴³ During the eighteenth century the most widely disseminated image of Louverture came from François Bonneville's 1802 engraving. Moreover, this depiction of Louverture is featured with other *Potraits des personnages de la Révolution* and is not a stand alone work of art nor is Louverture particularly featured. Of course, by 1804 the public conception of Louverture in France would be completely altered, and St. Domingue would come to symbolize the failure of the colonial system, the perils of the growing empire, and a point of consternation over what had been a decade before a great triumph of the revolution and Enlightenment. Before getting into a complete analysis of *Belley*, I would like to take the time to contrast Bonneville's *Louverture* and Copley's *Head of a Negro* so that we may better situate *Belley*. The presence of a black figure is

¹⁴³ Honour 106. In 1802, Wordsworth wrote: TOUSSAINT, the most unhappy man of men! / Whether the whistling Rustic tend his plough / Within thy hearing, or thy head be now / Pillowed in some deep dungeon's earless den; – / O miserable Chieftain! where and when / Wilt thou find patience? Yet die not; do thou / Wear rather in thy bonds a cheerful brow: / Though fallen thyself, never to rise again, / Live, and take comfort. Thou hast left behind / Powers that will work for thee; air, earth, and skies; / There's not a breathing of the common wind / That will forget thee; thou hast great allies; / Thy friends are exultations, agonies, / And love, and man's unconquerable mind. See: William Wordsworth, *Collected Poems of William Wordsworth*, Herfordshire: Mackays of Chatham, 1994. pp. 305.

rare in paintings from the eighteenth century, stand alone representations are virtually nonexistent.

Physiognomic typology tended to sway representation: the argument that moral character and intelligence could be read on a man's face rang out from the writing of Johann Caspar Lavater. Indeed, the theory was so widespread by 1794 that Belley himself used it as a counterattack on one of his political enemies Gouli, a white plantation owner. Helen Weston writes of Belley, "defending blacks against the charge of brutishness or of having 'souls without physiognomy' (*'des ames sans physiognomie'*) and turns the tables on Gouli: 'Ah Goulie You who dare to profane nature, it is your physiognomy which betrays a lack of a soul.'"¹⁴⁴ George Levitine, who pioneered the study of Girodet, has documented with meticulous detail how Girodet deployed Lavater's theories both positively and negatively throughout his career. This includes the artist's own self portrait as well as his scathing critique by way of portrait of Madame Lange.¹⁴⁵ Levitine does not include *Belley* in his study but does state that, "The most far-reaching consequences of Lavater's influence may be found in Girodet's psychological interpretation of the human figure in his historical paintings of the last two decades of the eighteenth century."¹⁴⁶ *Belley* may be absent from Levitine as he views Lavater as having a role in Girodet's enhanced painterly erudition and so treats physiognomic study as positive and without

¹⁴⁴ Helen Weston, "Representing the Right to Represent: The 'Portrait of Citizen Belley, Ex-Representative of the Colonies' by A.-L. Girodet," *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, No. 26 (Autumn 1994) pp. 83-99. pp. 94-95.

¹⁴⁵ George Levitine, "The Influence of Lavater and Girodet's Expression des Sentiments de L'Ame," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (March 1954), pp. 33-44. pp. 37 and 39.

¹⁴⁶ Id. at 39.

critique. Therefore, what Levantine does not acknowledge as other art historians do, is Lavater's theory as prevalingly racist with regard to non-whites.¹⁴⁷ Grigsby recognizes, like Levantine, that Girodet utilized Lavater's theories.¹⁴⁸ However, Grigsby puts forward a complex reading of Girodet's use of Lavater by diminishing it with regards to *Belley*:

Rather than seeing *Belley* reduced to a typology, the painting suggests that *Belley* can be read just as Raynal's 'physionomie intellectuelle' was read: not as a body dictating the character of a person but as a person helping us to determine the significance of a body. The specificity of *Belley*, his features but also his age, differentiates Girodet's portrait from the generalizing image of a young black man deployed by Lavater [...] In the portrait, age functions as a personal rather than typological attribute.¹⁴⁹

Lavater, though, does not need to be reductive at all. Surely we can conceive that Girodet was interested in the theory of physiognomy in order construct unique qualities within his painting and that Girodet may have also deployed the general theory of Lavater in his work without the need to deploy Lavater's racial theories. Moreover, as Levantine writes:

Thus, for some artists, like Girodet, physiognomical theories seemed very opportunely to fulfill a need. Lavater expressly described physiognomy as the study of *caractère* 'the knowledge of the signs of the powers and inclinations of men,' and opposed it to pathognomy, 'the knowledge of the signs of the passions.' Hence Lavater's physiognomy, with its belief in 'the indispensability, and individuality, of all men,' its fatalistic insistence on the inescapable interdependence of man's body and mind, and its pseudoscientific subtleties of observation, appeared to offer a new method, which could be usefully combined with the *Théorie du geste* to convey *caractère* more strikingly and more truthfully.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Grigsby 50.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Id. at 51.

¹⁵⁰ Levantine 40.

I agree with Grigsby that Belley and Raynal are on equal footing, so to speak, however, I feel that the equality does not come from the absence of Lavater's influence on Girodet. Rather, Girodet treats Belley and Raynal equally and is blind to either man's race. Simply put, Girodet is attempting to construct defining identities for his figures.

We have indeed seen various types of aesthetic racial stereotyping. Hogarth, while generally positive toward blacks, did not shy away from racial caricatures. He was equitable in his distortions and mocking of people: every race and class had the chance to be offended by Hogarth. With regard to portraiture of black figures in the late eighteenth century, though, I find that it is the absence of Lavater that is most notable. Of the above works only Bonneville's engraving seems dependent upon Lavater. Honour discusses the "weakly defined" quality of the image and, apart from Louverture's absence in France, I would suggest that these generic qualities can be likened to Johann Lips' etchings for Lavater of a *Moor* and of a *Virginian*, here meant to be a Native American.¹⁵¹ Assuming that Bonneville did use the engravings by Lips to inspire his own elements such as the scarification marks on Louverture's nose, his distorted ears, full lips, and enlarged cranium at the brow line would begin to make more aesthetic sense. By 1801 Napoleon already had troops poised to reclaim St. Domingue and reinstate slavery. Bonneville's engraving may have been an attempt to diminish Louverture by contrasting him to Etienne Mentor, Belley's successor on the Council of Five Hundred. Mentor had shown himself a defender of whites in St. Domingue whereas Louverture had defied Napoleon

¹⁵¹ Honour 107.

by, in 1799, invading Spanish, Santo Domingo and, in 1801, distributing a St. Domingue constitution.

In strong contrast to Bonneville's *Louverture* is Copley's *Head of a Negro* from twenty-seven years earlier. In 1864 when Copley's son, Lord Lyndhurst, had passed and his estate went up for sale the image was listed. The explanatory note of the painting included the phrase, "the boy saved from the shark."¹⁵² Copley's portrait provides detail and gives definition that was somewhat lost in *Watson and the Shark* but, given the reliance upon narrative in history painting, that is to be expected. The figure in *Head of a Negro* exudes a warm smile and dazzling eyes which draw the viewer into the painting. Intimacy and naturalism make Copley's sketch one of his most remarkable. And, in many ways, Copley captures the individuality that Girodet will later strive for in *Belley* and that Bonneville failed to achieve in *Louverture*. This black figure even possesses an interior life that is somewhat absent from Copley's history paintings: Watson exudes only the emotion of terror, the expressions in *Head of a Negro* are myriad. To be sure, Copley's trade as a portraitist can be easily observed in *Head of a Negro*. And, we do not see physiognomic hierarchies which his predecessors deployed in composing their pet-like black servant figures. The chief difference, then, between Copley's rendering of a black man and Girodet's is application of worldly experience. Again, with regard to Copley, I do not see this as critique; rather, Girodet is seeking to encapsulate many allegorical and

¹⁵² Jules David Prown, *John Singleton Copley*, 2 vols., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966. II, pp. 402.

historical themes within *Belley*. Due to this, Belley is somewhat aloof to the viewer as he must be, he is an idea. Copley's figure, however, gives us the individual soul of a man.

Let us examine then the portrait of the man of French and Haitian history and attempt to see what Girodet saw and created without evidence of commission. Throughout part one I have worked to show a certain evolutionary pattern in the depictions of the black figure in eighteenth century art. Girodet's portrait is the culmination of many artists and artistic moves which came before him. The final product is something that is allowable because of artistic precedence: Hogarth then West then Copley then Morland now Girodet. Furthermore, naturally engrained within the image is the challenge of Blake and Trumbull to the idea of masters and slaves. Worth noting in the cultural exchange of images of slavery is that Morland's *The Slave Trade* received a printing in Paris in 1794 honoring abolition.¹⁵³ France in 1794, though, is not the only political consequence considered by Girodet.

Guillaume Thomas François Raynal's death in 1796 left a void in living iconographic figures from which the Directory could draw. Raynal, after all, had denounced the Revolution on May 31 1791, "My eyes filled with tears when I saw the most evil men use the vilest intrigues to stain the revolution; when I saw the sacred name of patriotism prostituted to villainy" and lived out the Republic in self-imposed exile. His letter to the Assembly had been met with such ire that a bust of him in Marseille was placed in a madhouse: Saint-Lazare. Raynal's position of demagogue for the Revolution

¹⁵³ Boime 62.

was thus downplayed to the point of his being mad and, ironically, a slave.¹⁵⁴ This would seem to be more convenient than, on the one hand, ascribing to his philosophies while, on the other, having to acknowledge Raynal's monarchist views. When the Republic fell and the Directory took power, Raynal was again elevated to national statesman, though, as stated, this newfound glory would be short lasting. Jean-Joseph Espercieux created a marble bust of Raynal for the Salon of 1796 -- this bust is, essentially, the same bust we see in Girodet's painting.¹⁵⁵

Much is often made of the detail work in the bust, but it is rendered as was the Espercieux piece of 1796 and bears a likeness to classical depictions of philosophers. I find that not enough is said about the proportion of the bust. While it is conceivable to say that the crown of the two men's heads begins on the same plane, Raynal's head is epic in contrast to Belley. Indeed, the folds of Raynal's chin are parallel to Belley's shoulders. Thus, it is such that his stature is magnified. Moreover, he is transposed out of his setting in France and placed into the foreign local of Saint Domingue. And it is not simply a bust. It is a bust atop a tomb-like pillar of brown, veined marble that has been decorated still further with moulding below the initial top marble. The face in the Espercieux bust reminds us of a death mask staring blindly out from a blindingly white prison. And for Girodet to place it in such a peculiar manner atop a mausoleum-like structure of brown marble is at the least an implication of still existent racial hierarchies –

¹⁵⁴ Pierre Jean-Baptiste Chaussard, an art critic, wrote a pamphlet *Letter From a Free Man to the Slave Raynal*.

¹⁵⁵ There is some debate as to if the initials "G." "T." stand for Guillaume Thomas in the painting or Girodet Troison as Thomas is more commonly abbreviated "Th." in this period as seen on the Espercieux bust. Though Girodet could be keeping with the Roman tradition of all capital letters as Espercieux

black men being granted their freedom from and by white men without a sense of irony – as well as the implication of the free black figure literally leaning upon the life of the white man for support. Furthermore, in terms of painterly structure and the nude, the absence of the white male body, in terms of Raynal, allows for a replacement of sorts of Belley’s own body. Raynal, in essence, lends his French body to Belley. The body is then adorned, affected, and accented with as many contemporary French qualities as possible. *Belley* does not per se attempt to atone for nor critique the institution of slavery either. Present within the painting is a historical acknowledgement, but what we are given to see is the advancement of one individual. The unique social and political situation that existed in St. Domingue allowed for Belley to rise from slave to statesman.

Hanging side by side at the Salon de l’Élysée of 1797 and again in the Salon of 1798 were two depictions of a male body by Girodet. Blanc radically challenging the viewer to look upon a new type of male nude body while, at the same time, noir the clothed free man of color who, three years hence, has now assimilated and is assimilating Parisian culture and who still possessed some of the characteristics which stereotypically defined him as African. The quiet of *The Sleep of Endymion* and the resoluteness of Belley side by side. The people of the time commented on Belley, “Ah! My God! How black he is!”¹⁵⁶ Darcy Grigsby’s analysis of Belley is dependent upon such stark contrasts of black and white. In regards to the bust of Raynal in the portrait of Belley she writes, “Girodet did not want us to miss what he proposed as the powerful bedrock truth of the

¹⁵⁶ Quoted in Bellenger 331.

racial binary of black and white. Blanching the Frenchman into true whiteness was only one of the ways he heightened the viewer's awareness of this anchoring polarity."¹⁵⁷

Endymion's nudity and an accoutered Belley provide the same strong dichotomy as the complexion of their skins. Grigsby and others have already provided analysis as to the difficulty of introducing the black nude into French academic painting and public reception itself.¹⁵⁸ Whereas, Endymion's body transgresses the norms of the academy *Belley* is so extraordinary because of the overt populist narrative of the subject. *Belley* stands out among Girodet's other paintings because it assumes history painting status and, yet, does not seek to glorify the man rather than show him plainly.¹⁵⁹ A male nude is not shown in *Belley* and the form of man is subsumed into and by the clothing he wears. French sensibilities and aesthetics attack and mold the body of Belley covering it in a manner which does not allow for violation against the academic nude. The populist narrative of the painting is in constant struggle with the social problems of displaying an African body. This fact may account for much of the overdetermined analysis of Belley's bulging penis not so subtly dangling down his left trouser leg: in many ways the strange abstraction calls more attention to the fact that Belley is not being shown as a nude. And perhaps this is Girodet's solution to representing the black male body.

Belley's body is not presented as that of a neoclassical hero or former slave.

Returning to Morland's *African Hospitality* or Blake's *Negro Hung Alive by the Ribs to a*

¹⁵⁷ Grigsby 14.

¹⁵⁸ See for example Grigsby 42-57.

¹⁵⁹ Neufchâteau, the director of the Salon of 1798, had originally removed *Belley* from the exhibition hall as he did not classify Girodet's work as a history painting. Girodet protested and claimed his right as a Prix de Rome winner to justify showing his work in the Salon; his claim was successful.

Gallows we see a consistency of perceived muscularity by Europeans of slave bodies. Undoubtedly this comes from the tremendous amount of physical labour which slaves performed. Muscularity, however, violates the eighteenth century ideal of masculine beauty. As Alex Potts writes, “An aggressive display of hard steely muscles or brute physical violence could all too easily appear ludicrous or repulsive rather than impressive of compelling.”¹⁶⁰ Winckelmann cites the “soft tenderness” and “lofty structure” of the *Apollo Belvedere* as his absolute of male beauty.¹⁶¹ Potts continues his analysis of Winckelmann and the *Apollo Belvedere* by making note of the Apollo’s first act of heroism: the slaying of Python. Potts states of the effectiveness of the statue during the Enlightenment:

What becomes clear as you read through the numerous descriptions of the statue from the period is that its unique appeal among the classical masterpieces of ancient sculpture lay partly in its unusually vivid ambiguity, its potential to be the focus of competing fantasies of unyielding domination and exquisite desirability [...] The whole conception is less than subtly eroticized, the violent release of the deadly arrow effectively giving way to suggestions of a pleasurable relaxation of tension after sexual discharge [...] Apollo, ‘by his air of grandeur, penetrates you, and makes you feel the traits and splendours of a superhuman majesty that he spreads out, so to speak, around him.’¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994. pp.117.

¹⁶¹ Johann Joachin Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave, Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2006. pp. 333.

¹⁶² Potts 118-123.

Girodet was a great admirer of Wincklemann's theories, "it is purely ideal," the artist wrote.¹⁶³ The spectator when looking upon *Belley* experiences Girodet's fascination and eroticization of the body of the other. In order to Europeanize the black figure it is little wonder that Girodet would draw on the *Apollo Belvedere* for inspiration as it was held as the perfection of European beauty at the end of the eighteenth century. Hanging *Belley* next to *Endymion* only served to reinforce the parallels between them and Girodet's reliance upon Wincklemann. Indeed, when confronted with the two works, our eyes darting back and forth, we are given precisely the erotic masculinity found in Wincklemann.

White panic at the threat of black male genitalia works on multiple levels within *Belley*. First, there is the parallel to the *Apollo Belvedere* where the viewer is enticed by "violent aggression and graceful beauty."¹⁶⁴ In the case of the male spectator this creates the fear of being penetrated by the black phallus. Girodet solves this crisis for both male and female European spectators in the Salon of 1798 by pairing *Belley* with *Endymion*. *Endymion* is already passive and androgynous. His body displaced the viewer's libidinal angst by providing a pre-made receptacle. After all, *Endymion* is already being dominated and penetrated by the moon. The second phallic crisis occurs when the viewer recognizes *Belley* as Python and not Apollo. Whereas *Belley*'s phallic power was reduced by

¹⁶³ Quoted in Bellenger 210. Among the books found in Girodet's library after he died were: *Les Peintures antiques d'Herculanum*, *L'Histoire de l'art chez les anciens*, *Monumenti antiqui*, and *Les Voyage d'Anacharis*.

¹⁶⁴ Id. at 123.

Endymion in the first scenario it is heightened in the second. If *Endymion* is meant to be Apollo then his sleeping body cannot rise to conquer Python.

Endymion's features are much different from those of Belley. To be sure, both paintings have fair amounts of fetishistic flourishes, though this could be said of any major work by Girodet. However, with regard to *Endymion* erotics are more ubiquitous. In future instances the artist's amatory gaze, where his eye lingers and so too does our's, will be more controlled more subtle. That is, at least, until 1810's *Revolt in Cairo*. Here, as if in the throws of a last rapturous painterly exclamation, Girodet caresses every jot of two "other" males. The warrior who uses all of his strength and muscularity to defend the precious felled Mameluke master. Visually, the line which composes the warrior who erupts from his clothing, is especially defined.¹⁶⁵ Girodet's use of such a strong compositional line recalls the technique used by John Flaxman in illustrating. Likewise, in Girodet's illustrations for the *Anacreon* the same heavy line is present. In the case of *Revolt in Cairo* the effect similar to bas-relief. Like a halo this technique serves to draw the viewer deeper into the intricate weaving of muscles – line, then, serves to draw the viewer deeper into the composition and to maximize our time in a visual space which has been privileged by the artist. Thomas Crow writes, "It is the Arab who exhibits the heroic nudity that allows exertion in extreme peril to be manifested sensually in every

¹⁶⁵ The extreme and almost embroidery like line can be especially seen in the large toe of the warrior just to the right of the Mameluke's sword. Indeed, in such an overcrowded composition this area stands out as a visual hole and, thus, the detail is easily seen.

anatomical detail.”¹⁶⁶ Sensuality is the aura that hangs about all of Girodet’s non-European bodies.

As I alluded to earlier, *Belley* is not a monolith like the marble which the figure leans upon; nor is the painting a dedicated memorialization. Instead, Girodet has taken all of the varied nuances which were responsible for the real Belley’s success and deployed them allegorically throughout his painting. As we look deeper and deeper into the work the more we can draw out of it. There is a social history and a history of painting which must be applied to *Belley*. The man himself “conquered liberty” in 1764. Enlistment was one of the surest ways in which a slave could free himself. As Bellenger points out it is unlikely that Belley has amassed enough money to liberate himself at only seventeen years of age.¹⁶⁷ As a free man of color Belley participated in the Siege of Savannah which took place in 1779. As we recall 1778 is the year of Copley’s *Watson and the Shark* and I earlier supposed that part of the allegorical meaning behind that work lay in the shark being equated to certain perceptions held by whites in terms of slaves. I would now like to link this directly to Belley and American prejudices of the time. Leara Rhodes writes that there was great suppression of black assistance in the American Revolution, “Another facet of the colonial press was that their agenda did not include discussions of blacks except as slaves or criminals.”¹⁶⁸ She continues, “The newspapers in Savannah were no different than those in the rest of the country. However, more importantly in the

¹⁶⁶ Thomas Crow, *Emulation*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995. pp 260.

¹⁶⁷ Bellenger 325.

¹⁶⁸ Leara Rhodes, “Haitian Contributions to American History: A Journalistic Record,” *Slavery in the Caribbean and Francophone World*, ed. Doris Y. Kadish, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000, pp. 75-90. pp. 77.

South, references to blacks, especially free blacks, created panic in the slave owning population.”¹⁶⁹ One cannot miss the use of the word “panic.” And certainly it is simple to place Belley in a wide array of historical instances involving white panic: what we had perhaps not considered until this point is that those whom he was fighting for, so that they might be free from British oppression, wanted to keep men like him enslaved and his very presence and freedom disrupted established racial hierarchies. For his part Belley would return to St. Domingue after fighting in the American Revolution and as a free man integrate into the diverse and complex race-based class system. Bellenger notes that, “Belley worked in retail commerce [...] where he must have been successful since he was cited as a property owner when the Revolution erupted [in 1791].”¹⁷⁰ By 1794 he would be the black representative from St. Domingue to the National Convention in Paris and, in 1797, Girodet’s portrait would make *Citizen Belley, Ex-Representative of the Colonies* immortal. Quick indeed, but then so were most moments of the French Revolution.

Girodet’s *Belley* is transformed into a contemporary, stylish Frenchman while projecting to the viewer a historical documentation of the life of Belley. The means by which Girodet achieves this feat is through sartorial articulations and accoutrement. Relaxed and gazing off toward some unknowable sight Belley wears a fitted blue *redingote* with pale pink collar; underneath is a buff yellow vest which matches his breeches; he wears a white ruffled shirt; a white scarf wraps the entirety of his neck.

¹⁶⁹ Id. at 78.

¹⁷⁰ Op. cit. There is the further implication in David Geggus, “Racial Equality, Slavery, and Colonial Succession during the Constituent Assembly,” *American Historical Review* Vol. 95, no. 5 (December 1990), pp. 1290-1308. that Belley was a slave owner.

Languidly, the knot in the scarf falls ever so slightly to the right. Belley accessorizes his outfit with a gold earring in his right ear; a large silk sash of sky blue, white, and pink; a gold watch fob dangles below his right little finger; his *en bateau* is wrapped in ribbon of the same colors as his sash, however, the blue, white, and red feathers protruding from the bow retain a vibrancy that is absent in the other tricolor trimmings.

Generally, the origin of Belley's clothing is thought to be the uniform of the National Convention.¹⁷¹ However, I would like to propose that the clothing which Belley wears is far more complex and is closely related to the structure of portraiture and the cosmopolitan man which *Belley* represents. My analysis varies sharply from current scholarship which uses a similar methodological approach to Girodet's portrait.¹⁷²

Belley's fashion sense, in a way, tells the story of his free life, and I would like to explore the larger art historical connotations of Belley's costume. In fact, we should suppose that the clothing Belley wears gives the viewer a timeline of the man's life from the American Revolution to the present day of 1797. We will see that foreign influence can be brought to bear when reconciling the fashion history Girodet presents in his portrait of the ex-representative. Moreover, in decoding various components within Belley's togs we will

¹⁷¹ See Bellinger, 327; Helen D. Weston, "Representing the Right to Represent: The 'Portrait of Citizen Belley, Ex-Representative of the Colonies by A. -L. Girodet,'" *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, No. 26 (Autumn, 1994) pp. 83-99. pp. 97. amongst others.

¹⁷² Richard Brilliant in *Portraiture* (1991) sees a certain degree of inequality of representation within the dialectical presentation of Raynal and Belley. Brilliant finds, "[Raynal's] presence in Belley's portrait is particularly appropriate, a noble and sever counterpoint to Belley's casual, contemporary image [...]. Towards Belley the artist reveals a prejudiced attitude, governed by typological preconceptions about him that operate beneath a veneer of civilization and employ classical references of a very different order of meaning. Raynal's portrait-within-the-portrait takes the prestigious form of a classical bust, overtly proclaiming its suitability as an image of a white, European intellectual [...]. Belley is portrayed as an outsider whose pose recapitulates that of the *Capitoline Satyr* [...] well-known to the artist's public and traditionally interpreted as the image of an uncivilized being." (see page 35)

see the transformation of a slave to a Frenchman. Likewise, the body of *Belley* is comprised of allegorical signifiers. Darcy Grigsby points out that, “Pictorial representation would need to be inventive if it was to constitute a black freedom that was French. Girodet’s portrait would bring into painting a novel person whose entirely unprecedented wedding of blackness and freedom – within the frame of Frenchness – was inadequately secured.”¹⁷³ Racial tensions seem to no small degree a larger problem back St. Domingue rather than in France by 1797. In terms of Girodet’s portrait there would seem to be evidence of the artist’s fascination with the process of *becoming* rather than political inequalities. That is to say, Girodet considers what it means for Belley to become a Frenchman rather than seeing the garb of the French as another type of shackle: a sartorial debt.

We must start our sartorial analysis in the most unlikely and smallest of places: a button. Just above the faded blue in the sash which Belley wears around his waist on the right side of his jacket is the largest and most prominent of twelve gold buttons. In fact, two buttons stand in juxtapositions as Girodet’s chiaroscuro darkens the second large button into virtual obscurity. However, if we examine the visible button clearly we can note that, in relief on its surface, there is an anchor. This single notation upon Belley’s jacket seems to be reference to his military service during the American Revolution. As I indicated earlier, in 1764 Belley joined the French military and in 1779 a fleet under the command of Vice Admiral Jean-Baptiste, Comte d’Estaing arrived in St. Domingue.

¹⁷³ Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, *Extremities: Painting Empire in Post-Revolutionary France*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002. pp. 22. An excellent examination of the problem Grigsby hints at is Sue Peabody’s “*There Are No Slaves in France*”: *The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime*.

Belley was one of the five hundred *gens de couleur*: a member of the *Chasseurs-Volontaires de St. Domingue* who would fight for d'Estaing in the failed Siege of Savannah.¹⁷⁴ Though the battle itself was unsuccessful Belley would have a distinguished military career eventually rising to the rank of *commandant de la gendarmerie de Saint-Domingue*.

We should consider sailing in a dualistic way, military service as well as the slave trade, and then the idea of the sea and liberty takes on a new meaning. Furthermore, as Grigsby points out, Belley's narrative of how he was treated during his crossing to France as delegate closer resembled the experience of a slave ship, not the envoy of an ambassador.¹⁷⁵ Quoting Belley, then, "Ferocious and furious Frenchmen had come on board. Upon their arrival, they began by insulting the deputies [...] they mistreated Joseph, beat him, went from there to Belley, took away his sword, beat him, soiled him, stole his watch, his money, his papers, all the effects he had in his chamber."¹⁷⁶ This antagonist reminds us of the Morland's *The Slave Trade* and the usurping of African bodies by "ferocious and furious Frenchmen." Belley is not completely de-aculturated, as Grigsby suggests, but the process has certainly begun. Nonetheless, a complete return to the status of slave was unlikely. Just as we are reminded of Morland we should

¹⁷⁴ For more on the Siege of Savannah see George P. Clark, "The Role of the Haitian Volunteers at Savannah in 1779: An Attempt at an Objective View," in *Phylon* Vol. 41, No. 4 (4th Qtr., 1980), pp. 356-366; T.G. Steward, *How the Black St. Domingo Legion Saved the Patriot Army in the Siege of Savannah, 1779*, Washington D.C.: The American Negro Academy, 1899.

¹⁷⁵ Grigsby on 28 writes, "Only after being stripped of sword and beaten was Belley soiled, robbed of his watch (technology), money (class), papers (legal status and individual identity), and cockade (French citizenship) [...] By stripping Belley of his sartorial and legal property, his assailants assimilated him to the slaves on board trade ships."

¹⁷⁶Quoted from Grigsby on 28.

likewise think to *Watson and the Shark* with a referent to white panic. Preemptively striking out against the black body certainly signifies the fear entrenched within race based hierarchy. Thus, it is at sea where both slavery and freedom have been at odds with each other with regards to Belley's captivity and freedom.

The American Revolution, where Belley earned his freedom, provides ample art historical grounding for more of the aesthetic qualities which constitute Belley's clothing: what will become known in France as the *habit à l'anglaise*. If we look to the work of John Trumbull we see a strong English and American influences in what may be regarded as Belley's militaristic attire. Moreover, it is safe to say that Girodet would have been exposed to the work of Trumbull:

Trumbull had met Thomas Jefferson in London, in 1785, and writes of him in his autobiography, 'He had a taste for the fine arts and highly approved my intention of preparing myself for the accomplishment of a national work. He encouraged me to persevere in this, and kindly invited me to Paris to see and study the fine works there and to make his house my home during my stay.' Trumbull availed himself of the invitation and was kindly received. He had with him his two paintings, the *Battle of Bunker's Hill* and the *Death of Montgomery*, and these met Jefferson's warm approbation [...] Trumbull was well received by the principal artists of Paris, by Le Brun and David particularly – the latter, he says, becoming his warm and efficient friend; also by Houdon, the sculptor and others. His journal, in Paris, gives a detailed account of his life there, principally referring to his study of works of art. He 'found David, in his studio in the old Louvre, at work upon his *Horatii receiving their swords from their father*,' upon which he comments as follows: 'Figures large as life, the story well told, drawing pretty good, coloring cold.'¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷ John Ferguson Weir, *John Trumbull: A Brief Sketch of His Life*, New York: Scribner's, 1901. pp. 22-23.

Not only did Girodet produce a realized version of David's *The Death of Camilla*¹⁷⁸ but, also, the copy of *Oath of Horatii*.¹⁷⁹ Next to his rival Drouais, Girodet would have been one of the more notable, upcoming students in David's studio in 1786. Thus, it is fair to say that if David and Trumbull were "warm and efficient" friends, then Girodet would have been witness to such a relationship. We know that David himself visited Trumbull to see the two works he was showing in Paris in 1786 from Irma Jaffe's work:

Sometimes Trumbull played host to visitors at the Hôtel de Langeac who came to see his *Bunker's Hill* and *Quebec*. [...] Another day brought another regicide, Jacques-Louis David, who was much more impressed with the paintings than Trumbull realized. 'His commendation, I fear, was too much dictated by politeness,' he thought. But years later when Rembrandt Peale was painting Davids portrait, the French artist asked him, 'Why is it that all the best painters in London were Americans ... West, Copley, Trumbull, Allston.'¹⁸⁰

Assuming the obvious connection between David and Girodet as master and pupil in terms of early artistic formation; what are the aesthetic qualities can we ascribe to Trumbull's works in relationship to Girodet? In *Bunker's Hill* we can see, to the far right of the canvas, two figures: Thomas Grosvenor, the soldier, and a slave holding a gun. Grosvenor was a colonial soldier and, if we look to his uniform, we see what is essentially a disheveled version of Belley's. Moreover, Trumbull's black and white bodies are inverted by Girodet in *Belley*. Trumbull's white figure blocks the black body of the servant who, in effect, is reduced to a disembodied black head. In *Belley*, Girodet places

¹⁷⁸ The *grand prix* competition was themed around Camilla in 1785.

¹⁷⁹ David's sketch is entitled *The Triumphant Horatio Entering Rome*, Girodet's painting is *The Death of Camilla*.

¹⁸⁰ Irma Jaffe, *John Trumbull: Patriot-Artist of the American Revolution*, Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1975. pp. 122.

the bust (another form of disembodied head) of Raynal to Belley's right. Thus, the white body is missing.

Within the context of the dismembered or wounded body – *Watson and the Shark*, *Death of Major Pierson*, *Bunker's Hill*, *Belley* – we have seen there is a power dynamic at work. Belley draws power and abolitionist philosophy from Raynal; Grosvenor is supported by his servant. *Bunker's Hill* and *Belley* are in dialogue with each other in so far as Trumbull's work reveals the reliance of the white American body upon the black servant body, and Girodet shows the former French slave's body's dependence on the writing of Raynal. *Belley*, then, reveals not only a transference of ideas but a body itself. It is almost as though Raynal has given his French body to Belley. What the viewer is left with, then, is a convergence of an African and French body which simultaneously, in terms of skin color, appears more African; yet, affects the habit and manner of a Frenchman. Belley's clothes and stature, after all, are the only means by which we can assume his assimilation or even his identity.

The continual warlike state in the West produced fashion which reflected the militaristic nature of the time as much in England as in France or America. Moreover, Belley's participation in the French military during the American Revolution would imply his exposure to American styles of dress, in addition to French military uniforms. Combined, then, with Girodet's exposure to Trumbull, some of the details in Belley's clothing style become clearer. Having earlier discussed the inversion of power relationships between slave and master we now can see the transplanting of the clothing which adorns the white body in *Bunker's Hill* onto *Belley's* black body. Co-current style

seems to abound as we may find the same uniform on the black servant in Copley's *Death of Major Pierson*. Thus, we have a white American soldier, a British black servant, and a French soldier / delegate wearing ostensibly the same clothing down to the plume in the hat. What the viewer might find to be most extraordinary is that the black figure, who could easily be a younger Belley with regard to uniform and historical time frame, is fighting for the British against the French. Indeed, he is not simply fighting but is actively killing a Frenchman within the moment of the painting.

By looking at more paintings from the late eighteenth century we will continue to find sartorial comparisons. *The Death of Montgomery* shows the American colonial uniform. In the center of the painting one is able to see a dead soldier, the dying Montgomery, and another colonial soldier all wearing identical uniforms which can easily be compared to that of *Belley*. For an even clearer look at this uniform we have Trumbull's 1792 *General George Washington at Trenton*. Washington wears epaulettes on his uniform, whereas the earlier soldiers in Trumbull do not, but it is a worthwhile visual exercise to obtain a clear view of the American military uniform. Imagine, if you will a tricolor sash around Washington's waist and remove the epaulettes. What is revealed is a uniform that is distinctly closer to that which Belley wears than the outfit Lesage-Senault wears in the portrait by Wicar and is offered by Bellenger as the proof for the origins Belley's clothes.¹⁸¹ Moreover, in terms of visual rhetoric, Trumbull's works present a fascination with exotic bodies: the black slave, Native Americans, and the turbaned man next to Washington's horse much as we saw in West and Copley before

¹⁸¹ Bellenger 326-328.

him. The overall aesthetic is not Neoclassical exactly – the pyramidal composition in the aforementioned history paintings is more akin to Renaissance painting – however the epic scope and currentness of theme relates strongly to what will be commonplace in France but was already to be found in anglo-painting.

The assumption for a Deputy of the Convention uniform ignores the fact that France was essentially at war with the entirety of Europe during the Revolution. “In order to sustain the war, 870,000 Frenchmen were drafted into the military by 1794. A passion for uniforms and uniformity spread throughout the nation.”¹⁸² Even civilian clothing in France bore a cut similar to the layering seen in military uniforms. Valerie Steele notes, “Initially, the concept of ‘liberty costume’ meant an end to clothing distinctions based on differences between aristocrats and commoners [...] As the Revolution became more radical, however, there was an additional attempt to suppress sartorial differences based on socioeconomic class.”¹⁸³ As I have said there were indeed attempts by the government to unify dress. The Comité de Salut Public again sought the opinion of David to design national costumes, “In actual fact, his ideas were not very clear. Summing up the confusion, Representative Espercieux asked at a public session of the Convention, ‘Shall we dress like Arabs, Greeks, Etruscans, or Romans?’”¹⁸⁴ And, as was the case in 1792, what David produced were outlandish costumes which were later engraved in a series by Dominique Vivant-Denon but most never left the page. “Only David’s loyal followers, his

¹⁸² Judith Chazin-Bennahum, *The Lure of Perfection: Fashion and Ballet, 1780-1830*, New York: Routledge, 2005. pp. 70.

¹⁸³ Valerie Steele, *Paris Fashion: A Cultural History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988. pp. 50-1.

¹⁸⁴ Philippe Séguy, “Costume in the Age of Napoleon,” in *The Age of Napoleon: Costumes from Revolution to Empire 1789-1815*, ed., Katell le Bourhis, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art. pp. 57.

students, wore his extravagant costume, and it was for the purpose of pleasing their mentor.”¹⁸⁵ In a time where frugality was the truest mark of a good citizen – see David’s own patchwork on Marat’s sheet – it is singular to think that, at the top level of government individuals sought and were rather excessive. Beyond David’s unrealized liveries were the very real dandies at the top of government:

The *Conventionnels*, who came from the lower and middle bourgeoisie, wore classic attire perhaps best epitomized by Robespierre who was famous for his elegance. For the Celebration of the Revolutionary Fête of the Supreme Being, held of June 8, 1794, for example, he was clad in a bright blue costume with nankeen breeches, a red, white, and blue silk sash around his waist, and a hat with tricolor plumes. Danton, another Convention leader, preferred a flashier kind of elegance, wearing fine clothes of costly fabrics and delicate lacework.¹⁸⁶

The style of Robespierre seems to reflect the values of the *élégants* rather than the more fervently Jacobin *sans culottes*. Taking into consideration Louis Philibert Debucourt’s *Promenade publique au Palais-Royal* versus Louis Boilly’s *Portrait of the Actor Chenard in Sans Culottes* both from 1792, Robespierre, and likewise Belley, would certainly seem more at home with the crowd at Palais-Royal rather than with the salt of the earth, rugged Jacobins.

To no small extent the color combinations we find in French clothing in the 1790s can be traced to Goethe’s *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* which was published in 1774. Robespierre’s blue jacket, yellow waistcoat, and yellow breeches are just like those of Werther and this is the outfit that the highest member of the government, the leader of the

¹⁸⁵ Id. at 58.

¹⁸⁶ Id. at 55.

Jacobins, wore for the Festival of the Supreme Being. Daniel Purdy chronicles the rise of the “Werther suit” and its appeal to Enlightenment youths. Purdy’s analysis of how this specific outfit integrated into society and what it meant is useful when considering Girodet’s *Belley*:

The transformation of Werther’s suit into a uniform that signals an illusionary masculine autonomy illustrates the political anatomy of bourgeois fashion. Within the nonliterary context of fashionable society, the Werther suit integrated the male body into a military code of discipline without violating clothes’ ideological promise of personal freedom. That military discipline appeared as an expression of individuality seems paradoxical. Yet the opposition between courtly and bourgeois modes of interpreting and displaying the body made just such an equation sensible. The emerging fashion culture adopted uniform styles as negation of ostentation. By presenting a blank surface, uniforms drew attention to operations performed below the first level of sartorial signification. Muscular stature, athletic performance, and practiced execution were foregrounded by the refusal to locate identity on the level of garments. The relatively simply, dark clothes worn by Werther insisted that the viewer not be satisfied with the most visible signs of rank. Rather, they asked that the viewer’s vigilance be prolonged and that the clothes be evaluated in terms of how well they integrated with the body’s activity.¹⁸⁷

By placing Belley in such a suit Girodet equalizes the African body with the white bodies of those who likewise wear the fashion.

What we have seen is that two emergent social phenomena dictated a militaristic as well as a fiction based fad in men’s clothing in the late eighteenth century. Simply by acknowledging the popularity of *Werther* beyond 1774 and the onset of the American Revolution in 1775 we can define a cultural epoch. If we further compound French involvement in the American Revolution, which concluded in 1783, as well as

¹⁸⁷ Daniel Purdy, *The Tyranny of Elegance: Consumer Cosmopolitanism in the Era of Goethe*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998. pp. 165.

transcultural exchange of the Enlightenment we have then accounted for the dissemination of taste. Purdy continues, “The Werther suit derived from military uniforms and country sportswear.”¹⁸⁸ Looking back to painting involving the American Revolution we know this to be true. As I have said, it is the English style, in terms of pattern, that became the dominate mode. Now, however, we have unified both pattern and color. The “Werther suit” is a type of cosmopolitan, European, Enlightenment uniform for all men.

The obvious anachronism of having Belley in a supposed Costume of the Republic would be that the conservative government under the Directoire would not have looked favorably toward a pro-Jacobin portrait. Moreover, there is little to suggest that there was one such unified mode of dress outside of the the Festival of the Supreme Being.¹⁸⁹ The physician John Moore wrote in his journal about David’s clothing designs:

David, the celebrated painter, who is a Member of the Convention and a zealous Republican, has sketched some designs for a republican dress, which he seems eager to have introduced; it resembles the old Spanish dress, consisting of a jacket with tight trowsers [sic], a coat without sleeves above the jacket, a short cloak which may either hang loose from the left shoulder or be drawn over both; a belt to which two pistols and a sword may be attached, a round hat and a feather are part of this dress, according to the sketches of David, in which full as much attention is paid to picturesque effect as to conveniency [...] Part of this dress is already adopted by many, but I have seen only one person in public equipped with

¹⁸⁸ Id. at 166.

¹⁸⁹ Indeed, for the Festival of the Supreme Being 225 delegates did wear tricolor feathers in their hats and tricolor sashes. However, considering that such combinations were already commonplace, see *The Death of Major Pierson*, and that the Festival of the Supreme Being would be one of the events that ultimately ended the reign of Robespierre and, by extension, the Revolution, it is unlikely that Belley would have owned artifacts from this event as he was not there and, furthermore, there was no such design for the Directory government when Girodet would have been painting the portrait. Again, the move to place *Belley* in a Jacobin context seems extremely unlikely particularly given the extraordinary backlash, socially, during the Directory.

the whole, and as he had managed it, his appearance was rather fantastical. His jacket and trowsers [sic] were blue; his coat, through which the blue sleeves appeared, was white with a scarlet cape; his round hat was amply supplied with plumage; he had two pistols stuck in his belt, and a very formidable sabre [sic] at his side: he is a tall man, and of a very warlike figure; I took him for a Major of Dragoons at least; on enquiring I find he is a miniature painter.¹⁹⁰

Hardly any of the above description can be found in *Belley*. The faded colors of the tricolor may be an indication toward the dissolved revolutionary government – to some degree Belley’s outfit may be regarded as antique, however, I would be more inclined to suggest that the pastel colors are once again similar to the style of the clothing in Debucourt print. Furthermore, as Grigsby shows, there was an effort by the St. Domingue delegation to assimilate, “The very Joseph beaten with Belley on board ship not only purchased many fashionable accessories like gloves and boots, he also employed numerous skilled and unskilled Parisian laborers: a music teacher taught him to play the violin, domestic servants cleaned his apartment, a tailor refurbished his military uniform [...]”¹⁹¹ And in terms of costuming *Belley* is more notable for what is missing with regard to revolutionary fashion: he has no cockade. As we see in the Wicar portrait of national dress the cockade is the fixture that binds the ribbon on Lesage-Senault’s hat. Costume historian Aileen Ribeiro gives us a contemporary account from 1794 when Belley would have been in Paris and on the market for clothes, “A certain Amaury Duval, for example, a civil servant in the Arts and Sciences Bureau of the Ministry of the Interior, in the

¹⁹⁰ John Moore, *A Journal During a Residence in France, from the Beginning of August, to the Middle of December, 1792*, Two Volumes, London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1783. II pp. 443 - 435.

¹⁹¹ Grigsby 36.

summer of 1794, attacked the mincing steps and exaggerated costume of the muscadins with their very short waistcoats, tight culottes, and ‘un franc d’une forme bizarre.’”¹⁹²

Girodet’s *Belley* in many ways resembles the contemporary muscadin fashion of post-revolutionary France. From Duval we can make the observation that Belley’s pants are tight and that his waistcoat is short. What better way, then, to unify the body of a former slave from St. Domingue with contemporary culture than present him in the general dress of the day? More to the point, fashion would to a large extent remain the same through 1815. If we look at the 1800 Dighton rendering of the British Dandy *George Bryan Brummell* and Vernet’s *Incroyables* from 1811 we see little to no change in men’s fashion or the cut of clothing over the course of the revolution and well into the empire. Both Belley and Beau Brummell wear their hair in the Titus hairstyle, they wear tailcoats, waistcoats, watch fobs, beaver top hats, pantaloons, and a cravat. Likewise, we see in the sketch by Vernet of the Incroyable the hyperbolic fashion of the day. During the Terror austerity had been forced upon the public. Now, as we see in the above quote by Grigsby, society made renewed turn toward consumerism of fashion and personal style. Individuality was sought and created, but fashion itself led to a unified style. Dressing up in elaborate costume broke men and women free from the repressive structure of the Terror. The sartorial unification of the *sans culotte* was now replaced by the trouser. Moreover, a new group of militant dandies, the *jeunesse dorée*, affected an effeminate manner while terrorizing Jacobins with the clubs they carried as walking sticks. In this regard we can see obvious parallels to Girodet’s composition of *Belley*. Belley assumes

¹⁹² Aileen Ribeiro, *Fashion in the French Revolution*, New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1988. 102.

an effete posture as he leans languidly against the brown marble pedestal. His bulging penis, which has been much discussed by art historians, serves as a replacement for an absent club.¹⁹³ This hyper-sexualized artistic gesture on the part of Girodet not only fetishizes the body of the other in terms of the black male body; it plays into social fears in terms of black male sexuality as well as the socio-economic de-castration of a repressed group: the *jeunesse dorée*.¹⁹⁴

There is some degree of confusion between muscadins and the *jeunesse dorée*, and that is because one need not have been a *jeunesse dorée* in order to have been regarded a muscadin. Muscadins were simply dandies and fops at the end of the eighteenth century who wore a great deal of cologne. Napoleon was a muscadin, and so was Robespierre as we see in George Duval's *Souvenirs de la Terreur*, "Robespierre était poudré, frisé, parfumé, et cent fois plus muscadin qu'aucun de nous."¹⁹⁵ To be sure, Robespierre was an oddity during the years following the execution of Louis XVI, but his style choices show that a certain manner of dress was consistent in France even if controversial. Looking to Boilly's 1791 *Portrait of Maximilien Robespierre* the viewer might wonder how Robespierre kept himself alive let alone rose to the head of government. Certainly this is not the style of the *sans culottes*. Political contradiction existed within the radical left of the revolution itself. The *sans culottes* aspired to be shop owners, to have property and, as Albert Soboul explains, "They demanded the taxation of

¹⁹³ See Bellenger 332; Grigsby 55; Crow 228.

¹⁹⁴ Girodet's own societal inclinations may be revealed here. During the revolution Girodet renounced his title and lands while in Italy out of fear of Jacobin retribution. Now, in a post-*Thermidor* world he is trying to make his own way and may have felt sympathy with this group of young men.

¹⁹⁵ George Duval, *Souvenirs de la Terreur 1788 à 1793*, 4 Volumes, Paris, 1841. IV, pp. 4.

and restrictions on property; but at the same time, bent on economic freedom so dear to the capitalist bourgeois, they demanded the independence of the shop-owning class, of the artisans and of the small rural landowner.”¹⁹⁶ Thus, Robespierre symbolizes the bourgeois ideal of the *sans culottes*. His fashion is not like theirs but his politics are. Boilly’s portrait emphasizes the inherent contradiction of disparaging class hierarchies while aspiring to a level of aristocracy. And this is what Robespierre’s entire life would be. While he sits at a simple desk he wears a powdered wig, his clothing is almost entirely made of silk, and there is a diamond knee-buckles securing his breeches.¹⁹⁷ Everything about Robespierre’s appearance signifies *Ancien Régime*.

Ribeiro continues her examination of French fashion by concluding that, “As a contrast [to Robespierre there was] the slovenly appearance of journalist Jean-Paul Marat in his threadbare coat, tricolour cockade and stockings, plush breeches, red *gilet* and unbuttoned shirt collar; his shoes were tied with string [...] Most men chose the middle way between Robespierre’s finical elegance and the unkempt appearance of Marat.”¹⁹⁸ After Robespierre’s fall and execution on July 28, 1794, French society began to regroup from the convulsions of the Terror. The *sans culottes* began to disappear or were beaten into submission by monarchists who sought revenge. With regard to fashion the range tightened, though the color combination of blue coat and yellow pants would long outlive Robespierre. Indeed, the Incorruptible was shown in engravings of his execution in the

¹⁹⁶ Albert Soboul, *The Sans-Culottes: The Popular Movement and Revolutionary Government 1793-1794*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980. pp. 93.

¹⁹⁷ Ribeiro 84.

¹⁹⁸ Id. at 85.

infamous colors. Muscadins, and later *incroyables*, were the new extreme supplanting the shabby Jacobin aesthetic of Marat and the *sans culottes*. The conservative man was more likely to dress similarly to Pierre Sériziat as seen in David's 1795 portrait. David's brother-in-law perches himself confidently upon a rock veined with ivy in this country scene. Ewa Lajer-Burcharth remarks, "It is [...] not nature per se as much as the idea of masculine control over it that this likeness set in a landscape subtly conveys."¹⁹⁹

Domination or overcoming surroundings is a vital theme in *Belley*. Both Raynal and Belley foreground St. Domingue. A building in the background billows smoke hinting at the smoldering fires of the 1791 slave revolt. Morland's empathetic African figures are less powerful than the twinning of abolition which Girodet provides. Much the same as Lajer-Burcharth suggests that *Sériziat* controls his landscape so too do Belley and Raynal: Raynal through intellectualization, hence the antique philosophe quality to his bust, and Belley through overt masculinity. Masculinity which is clearly linked to his race.

Looking back to 1790 we find in Sir Henry Raeburn's *David Anderson* the sartorial model which French men would adopt during the Directoire. Indeed, we should take *Sériziat* and *Anderson* together as an explanatory note in deciphering the modern European man and his clothes with the ultimate goal of understanding *Belley*. Again, though, always retaining in our minds the image of the muscadin as the limit of fashion. Powder is cosmetic staple that I would argue all types of men have in common.

¹⁹⁹ Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, *Necklines: The Art of Jacques-Louis David after the Terror*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999. pp. 68.

Anderson's hair is so heavily powdered that the rim of his hat is bleached by it. David has lightly frosted Sériziat's collar with powder. Powder is crucial to the muscadin revival of old aristocratic vogues. Lastly, I would argue that Belley's greying hair comes not from age but prevailing tastes. Other essentials to style are rather uniform: high collars, round hats, high cut coats, etc. So where, then, are the final parallels between muscadins and Belley? I have already given my reading of Belley's enlarged penis; however, there is context beyond artistic and art historical interpretation. For a muscadin wore, "skin-tight breeches of the sort that critics condemned as immodest."²⁰⁰ A finishing touch to *Belley* and to muscadins is the the earring. Anderson and Sériziat could not wear an earring because they are meant to be country gentlemen. Belley's outfit speaks of the urban man. He is the man of Paris now. All of the modes and trends and eccentricities of the city are him and he is likewise them.

Noir, in full, is under revision and being prepared for submission for publication.

Jarvis, Matthew. *Noir / Blanc: Representations of Colonialism and Cosmopolitanism in Eighteenth Century Painting*.

²⁰⁰ Ribeiro 94.

Blanc

“Chat botté”

A cette époque de sa vie, Napoléon était laid. Depuis il s'est fait en lui un changement total. Je ne parle pas de l'auréole prestigieuse de sa gloire; je n'entends que le changement physique qui s'est opéré graduellement dans l'espace de sept années. Ainsi tout ce qui en lui était osseux, jaune, maladif même, s'est arrondi, éclairci, embelli. Ses traits, qui étaient presque tous anguleux et pointus, ont pris de la rondeur, parce qu'ils se sont revêtus de chair, dont il y avait presque absence. Son regard et son sourire demeurèrent toujours admirables; sa personne tout entière subit aussi du changement. Sa coiffure, si singulière pour nous aujourd'hui dans les gravures du passage du pont d'Arcole était alors toute simple parce que ces mêmes muscadins, après lesquels il criait tant, en avaient encore de bien plus longues; mais son teint était si jaune à cette époque, et puis il se soignait si peu, que ses cheveux mal peignés, mal poudrés lui donnaient un aspect désagréable. Ses petites mains ont aussi subi la métamorphose; alors elles étaient maigres longues et noires. On sait à quel point il en était devenu vain avec juste raison depuis ce temps-là. Enfin lorsque je me représente Napoléon entrant, en 1795, dans la cour de l'hôtel de la Tranquillité, la traversant d'un pas assez gauche et incertain, ayant un mauvais chapeau rond enfoncé sur ses yeux, et laissant échapper ses deux *oreilles de chien* mal poudrées, et tombant sur le collet de cette redingote gris-de-fer, devenue depuis bannière glorieuse, tout autant pour le moins que le panache blanc de Henri IV; sans gants, parce que, disait-il, c'était une dépense inutile, portant des bottes mal faites, mal cirées, et puis tout cet ensemble maladif résultant de sa maigreur, de son teint jaune;

enfin quand j'évoque son souvenir de cette époque, et que je le revois plus tard, je ne puis voir le même homme dans ces deux portraits.¹

If clothes make the man then Napoleon seems to have been off to an inauspicious start when living in Paris in 1795. To no small degree it seems impossible to conceive that, in a few years, the man described above would not only become a great military emperor akin to the classical caesars but, also, the generator of some of the most outlandish and awe inspiring fashion Europe had ever seen or would ever see. As France struggled to reform its identity, fashion and costume emerged to fill the needs of what was essentially a new nation. Now was the time of the *Incroyables* and the *Merveilleuses*. The false modesty and frugality that were exemplars of the Revolution were gone. Marat's patched sheet, which David painted dangling from a blood filled bath only served as irony for those who would dance at the *Bals des victimes*.²

¹ Laure Junot duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires complets et authentiques : De Laure Junot duchesse d'Abrantès. Souvenirs historiques sur Napoléon, la Révolution, le Directoire, le Consulat, l'Empire, la Restauration, la révolution de 1830 et les premières années du règne de Louis-Philippe*, Paris: J. de Bonnot, 1967. pp. 172-173. English Translation, "At this period of his life he was decidedly ugly: he afterward underwent a total change. I do not speak of the illusive charm which his glory spread around him, but I mean to say that a gradual physical change took place in him in a space of seven years. His emaciated thinness was converted into a fullness of face, and his complexion, which had been yellow, and apparently unhealthy, became clear and comparatively fresh; his features, which were angular and sharp, became round and filled out. As to his smile, it was agreeable. The mode of dressing his hair, which had such a droll appearance, as we see it in the prints of the passage of the bridge of Arcole, was then comparatively simple; for the young men of fashion, whom he used to rail at so loudly, at that time wore their hair very long. He was very careless of his personal appearance, and his hair, which was ill-combed, and ill-powdered, gave him the look of a sloven. His little hands, too, underwent a great metamorphosis. When I first saw him, they were thin, long, and dark; but he was subsequently vain of their beauty, and with good reason. In short, when I recollect Napoleon at the commencement of 1795, with a shabby round hat drawn over his forehead, and his ill-powdered hair hanging over the collar of his gray great-coat, which afterward became as celebrated as the white plume of Henry IV, without gloves, because he used to say they were a useless luxury, with boots ill-made and ill-blacked— with his thinness and sallow complexion – in fine, when I recollect him at that time, and think what he was afterwards, I do not recognize the same man in the two pictures."

² The actual existence of the balls is the subject of some dispute, David Bell in *The First Total War* goes so far as to say, "[They] never took place -- they were an invention of early nineteenth-century Romantic authors" (192). Nevertheless, the style and idea of the ball was inspired by the outlandishness of those reacting to the end of the reign of terror and the mere perpetuating of the urban legend, if it is indeed that, only stands as testimony to the prevailing attitude of the time.

Louis-Sébastien Mercier chronicles the events which took place in the Winter of 1794 following the beheading of Robespierre on July 28, 1794: women danced in wild passion wearing tight, form fitting muslin dresses, “Toutes les femmes sont en blanc, et le blanc sied à toutes les femmes. Leur gorge est nue, leurs bras sont nuds.”³ Stories abounded that crazed dancing took place upon puddles of blood and that women would place red ribbons around their necks to symbolize the cut of the guillotine. Moreover, as Octave Uzanne notes, the men present would lurch their heads in a macabre pantomime of beheading.⁴ Thus was the culture in March of 1795 when Napoleon found himself in Paris with no orders and essentially unemployed. Philippe Séguy has suggested that, “Napoleon saw costume as a way to maintain order and establish his dynasty by returning dress codes and reintroducing a chilling, constraining etiquette.”⁵ But first the young Bonaparte must come into his own: he was not born an emperor. In this part I will discuss how Napoleon came into being as a ruler and symbol. We will see how the body of Napoleon becomes an idea, much like the body of Belley, and how that body was composed of iconography from all over the French Empire. Unlike Belley, however, Napoleon will not be consumed and acculturated in the end. Instead, what we will see is that the symbolic values of the empire draw their agency from Napoleon himself. This part will rely as much on historical narrative as visual analysis as to understand the where and why of Napoleon’s corporeal transformation. Much like part one I will end with a

³ L.S. Mercier, *Le Nouveau Paris*, 6 vols., Paris, 1798. III, pp. 135-136.

⁴ Octave Uzanne, *The Frenchwoman of the Century*, London: J.C. Nimmo, 1886. pp. 9-12

⁵ Philippe Séguy, “Costume in the Age of Napoleon,” in *The Age of Napoleon*, ed. Katell le Bourhis, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989. pp. 24.

conclusive work of art: Ingres' *Napoleon I on his Imperial Throne*. In this painting we will see a combination of aesthetics from the north and south of the empire struggling to unify. *Blanc*, then, is a mechanism for presentation of the pan-European Napoleonic body.

Where does the eye rest when looking at Ingres' portrait of Napoleon? Three dominant colors compose the image: white, gold, and red. At a first glance the portrait might appear to be all texture: silk, velvet, ivory, gold, and ermine. We might assume that it is simply another state portrait like those by Girodet or Gérard, but it is not.⁶ Beyond the novelty of Napoleon being seated is the unification of visual signs with Ingres' portrait: the zodiac and eagle on the carpet, the ivory globes on Napoleon's throne, and reconstructed symbols of hereditary rule spanning the history of France. Immediately to me it is the interplay between ornament and man that is so fascinating. Napoleon stares out with a statue's eyes. The trappings adorning him are ancient and new, just like his empire. What is striking about this portrait is that it works in the opposite way of that portraiture usually does. Instead of the objects imbuing Napoleon with narrative authority it is he who transmits authority to them. Napoleon is the point of unification visually just as he is in terms of empire. Cosmopolitanism works with regard to Napoleon not because he is a citizen of the world but because he seeks to control the world and be its first citizen. What we must uncover is the process by which the man described at the beginning of this section ascends to heights of Valhalla and Olympus as an ivory god.

⁶ Girodet would eventually be commissioned or tasked with the creation of twenty-six copies of his state portrait which the artist seems to have been stuck with after the fall of Napoleon.

The text from Madame d’Abrantès describes not only an unflattering portrait of Napoleon’s dress and manner upon arriving in Paris but also makes mention of his yellow skin and poor features. Cultural disdain, as we have seen in *Noir*, for those from colonial France was at its apex during Napoleon’s youth. Napoleon did not possess a refined style of the French because he was not French. He was brought up on a tiny Mediterranean island which belonged to the French. Upon entering the world he had neither wealth, nor power, nor title. Napoleon in 1795 and for all of his youth was a nobody from nowhere: an awkward young man from an occupied island who did not fit in. And it is because of this that, for the better part of his life, he had hated all that was French. His friend and biographer, Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne, recalls the time the two shared while at the military school Brienne, “The temper of the young Corsican was not improved by the teasing he frequently experienced from his comrades, who were fond of ridiculing him about his Christian name Napoleon and his country. He often said to me ‘I will do these French all the mischief I can.’”⁷ Let us look at the early life of Napoleon, the Corsican, up until the evening where he would no longer be shrouded in obscurity but begin his rise to absolute power over a vast French empire, his empire. Along the way we must find the moment where the Corsican became French.

Born into minor nobility on the island of Corsica on August 15, 1769, Napoleone di Buonaparte was the second of seven other siblings: Joseph, Lucien, Elisa, Louis, Pauline, Caroline, and Jérôme. Corsica itself was divided politically as, one year prior,

⁷ Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne, *Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte*, 2 vols., ed. R. W. Phillips, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell and Company, 1836. I, pp. 7.

the island had come under French control and, while clemency was generally granted by the French government to those who had resisted the occupation, hard feelings ran deep and some eagerly awaited the return to power of the President, General-in-Chief, and commander of all resistance: Pasquale Paoli, known colloquially as *Babbú*, meaning father, from his exile in England. Paoli had been largely responsible for the autonomy held by Corsica since 1755.⁸ Steven Englund writes of Paoli, “[His] unique blend of the progressive and the dictatorial, as well as his irreproachable personal morality and total dedication to the public weal, gave Corsica one of the more original governments of Europe, and the celebrity status of a much admired nation. True, he evoked some grumbles for his Caesarian style of rule, yet in the end his was mainly seen as a figure out of Plutarch, a genuine matinee idol of the Enlightenment.”⁹ And it was hardly any wonder. Paoli had created a veritable island Utopia for the mostly peasant class population of about 140,000.¹⁰

Genoa, though, deeply indebted to France and fearing further military struggle with Great Britain, sought aid from Louis XV in 1764. On May 15, 1768 the Treaty of Versailles was signed between France and Genoa with the latter surrendering possession of Corsica to France in order to repay debts owed.¹¹ Noël Jourda, comte de Vaux,

⁸ Paoli was largely responsible for the writing and political campaigning of the Corsican constitution that was ratified in November of 1755. The document embraced the ideals of the Enlightenment including extending voting rights to women. Moreover, it declared that Corsica was a sovereign nation and severed ties with the Republic of Genoa which had ruled Corsica since 1284. A legislative Diet was formed as well as a standing army and judiciary. The island nation also boasted its own university at Corte.

⁹ Steven Englund, *Napoleon: A Political Life*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004. pp. 6.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ France’s interest in Corsica seems to be two fold. First, the gaining of a new territory after losses stemming from the Seven Years’ War and, second, to prevent further British control in the Mediterranean.

seigneur d'Artiac arrived in Corsica on April 7, 1769 after François Claude Chauvelin along with the Duc de Choiseul¹² and de Laudre had failed substantially in the first major conflict of the Corsican occupation: The Battle of Borgo.¹³ Seven months to the day the French force of 24,000 gained the upper-hand and decided the outcome of the conflict in Corsica. May 8th and 9th, 1769 saw the Battle of Ponte Novu. The site itself is a Genoese bridge that crosses the Golo River and the main route to the capital: Corte. Carlo Salicetti was in command of the small Corsican force which included a company of women soldiers. The battle was brief as there was but one strategy: the Corsicans charged head on across the Ponte Novu into a hellish barrage of crossfire. Dorothy Carrington quotes a French officer, Dumouriez, "The Corsicans loved liberty; we came to conquer them; they laid traps for us; they were right to do so."¹⁴ Voltaire wrote of the incident, "Leur arme principale était leur courage. Ce courage fut si grand, que dans un de combats, vers une rivière nommée le Golo, ils se firent un rempart de leurs morts, pour avoir le temps de charger derrière eux avant de faire une retraite nécessaire; leurs blessés

¹² Étienne François, comte de Stainville, duc de Choiseul was the chief proponent of French militancy during his various times as Foreign Minister of France (1758-1761, 1766, and 1770) but was also seen as a somewhat mixed figure in the public eye regarding France's defeat in the Seven Years' War. In linking Belley to Napoleon it is worth noting that de Choiseul was a principal figure in the colonization of San Domingo. His life is a fascinating series of exploits and anecdotes including support from Louis XV's mistress, Madame de Pompadour, and an over-reach of power in 1770 regarding the Falkland Islands which led to his temporary banishment from Paris. See: Roger Soltau, *The Duke de Choiseul*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1909.

¹³ Jean-Claude Di Pasquale, *Les Fils de la liberté: les fils de Pasquale Paoli*, Paris: Edilivre, 2007. pp. 193-194 "Après la victoire paoliste de Borgo, Mgr Torrigiani écrit au visiteur apostolique Struzzi: Le nom des Corses est désormais célèbre dans le monde entier. Marbeuf suspendant les hostilités, le comte de Vaux cherche à lui nuire en déclarant: 'Le Roi a singulièrement désapprouvé la suspension d'armes. C'est une tâche imprimée sur nos drapeaux.' Mais bientôt nombre de paolistes sont capturés et cent soixante d'entre eux sont embarqués pour toulon, alors que bon nombre de Corses, qui appartiennent déjà aux troupes françaises, appelle M. de Marbeuf à leur secours.

¹⁴ Dorothy Carrington, *Napoleon and His Parents: On the Threshold of History*, New York: Dutton, 1990. pp. 7.

se mêlèrent parmi les morts pour raffermir le rempart.”¹⁵The ensuing French slaughter was enough to quell the rebellion and Corsica fell into submission. Paoli himself abandoned the capital and fled for the mountains.

Napoleon’s father, Carlo Buonaparte, was a rather typical political opportunist. Prior to the battle of Ponte Novu, Carlo seems to have maintained a close relationship with Paoli. However, within a few months of the French conquest of Corsica, Carlo was socializing with the very men who had served as occupiers and soon was appointed the representative from Corsica to the court of Louis XVI in 1777.¹⁶ Napoleon, would describe the moment of his birth as though entering into one of his many military campaigns, “Thirty thousand Frenchmen spewed onto our coasts, engulfing the throne of liberty in seas of blood: such was the odious sight that first met my eyes.”¹⁷ Robert Asprey gives a comic if no less dramatic account of the birth of Napoleon, “On a hot August day Letitia [sic] was attending Mass when birth pains forced a hurried exit from the church. Reaching her house, she threw herself on a couch and soon gave birth to a male child.”¹⁸ Though, such seems to be the way of Letizia. The day was August 15 and it was the first celebration in Corsica in many years. Locals were celebrating the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and it was indeed fortunate that the cathedral was only yards away from the Bounaparte homestead. Letizia, “had no time to put herself to bed –

¹⁵ Voltaire, *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Perrotin, Paris: Furne, 1846. IV, pp. 425.

¹⁶ Marbeuf would serve as godfather of Napoleon.

¹⁷ Quoted in Englund, 12.

¹⁸ Robert Asprey, *The Rise and Fall of Napoleon Bonaparte*, New York: Basic Books, 2000. pp. 4.

she gave birth almost at once, almost without pain. The child was a boy with weak, spindly legs and an unusually large head.”¹⁹

The months after the birth of Napoleone were quite significant in the life of Carlo. Beginning on September 20, 1769 his name is listed as a *procureur*, or solicitor, for the court of Ajaccio. Two months later he would submit his thesis to obtain a doctorate of law from the University of Pisa; the following month, “Carlo returned to Corsica to be sworn in as a qualified lawyer – *avocat* – on 11 December by the Conseil Supérieur in Bastia.”²⁰ Carlo’s time in Pisa was viewed as a personal success by himself but is looked on by historians and Napoleon himself with more scrutiny. Indeed, Carlo’s time in Pisa seems most marked by his penchant for spending on clothes and parties; as Napoleon would remember, “[My father was] too fond of pleasure.”²¹ Nonetheless, social climbing served its purpose. Most Corsican children were fortunate to be educated in Italy. However Carlo sought better for his progeny. He wanted the education of his children to take place in France. And so through his political connections, Carlo was able to secure education at the finest schools in France, and he did not even have to pay for it.²² In late 1778, Napoleone was sent to Brienne in Northern France.

¹⁹ Carrington, 12.

²⁰ *Id.* at 55.

²¹ Quoted in Englund, 13.

²² John McErlean, “Scholarships for the Bonaparte Children: The Political Background,” *Napoleonic Alliance Gazette*, 4 (2003): 21-4. It should be noted that there is some conjecture over if it was Carlo’s social ambitions and connections which afforded his children’s education or the fact that it would seem that Marbeuf and Letizia were having an affair. Carrington hints at the question but acknowledges there is no firm proof, “Apart from Letizia’s two letters” as well as some of her other actions. See Carrington, 71, 125-126.

Brienne was a rather small school with only around one hundred students. Run by Franciscan monks conditions at the school were hard. Philip Dwyer provides a thorough and succinct description:

The students were to learn how to dress themselves, how to keep their belongings in order and to go without any kind of domestic servant. They had to go with their heads shaven until the age of twelve, when they were allowed to grow their hair long and to wear it in a ponytail. Hair was to be powdered only on Sundays and Feast days. They slept off tow corridors that each contained seventy rooms or cells. The cells were less than two square meters in size and contained no other furniture than a camp bed, a water jug, and a basin. Each boy had only a single straw mattress and one blanket, even in winter (and it snowed in Brienne) [...] In the evening, the students were locked in their rooms, which were only used for sleeping, and let out again once woken up.²³

The intended effect of the school was for a neutralization of status within the children of the nobility who attended as well as preparation for military service. Affable companionship was where Napoleon found the school most wanting. Disputes became a daily occurrence, and not only with other boys but monks too. Napoleon was not French. Nor was he able to trace his family history and name back through the centuries. His difficulty with the language and accent were not the only obstacles he faced. Self-isolating and territorial he resisted authority and rarely took part in sports or games.²⁴

In 1784 Napoleon left Brienne, bound for Paris, to obtain his commission in the artillery. He was to attend the *École des Cadets-gentilhommes* otherwise known as the *École militaire*. Originally, and with the encouragement of Chevalier de Keralio,

²³ Philip Dwyer, *Napoleon: The Path to Power*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007. pp. 27-28.

²⁴ Two anecdotes of Napoleon's time at Brienne consist of his organization of a snowball attack on a monk with whom he had a feud as well as a garden he kept for himself to read in privacy. Both of these stories give some indication as to what sort of man Napoleon would eventually become.

Napoleon had wanted to join the French Navy. However, he had not studied long enough at Brienne to be considered.²⁵ The French artillery would serve as the template for what would be Napoleon's own army in two decades. One could not buy rank in the artillery, instead it was a meritocratic system where advancement was up to the individual. As a natural consequence, the artillery was the finest branch of the French military. The social experience for Napoleon at the *École militaire* was not so different from that at Brienne, "The fifteen-year-old Buonaparte negotiated this new environment with the only resources at his disposal – introversion and hostility [...] he dealt with any feelings of inferiority [...] by working hard and, so it is said, by joining minor nobles in fist fights with the boys of high birth."²⁶ Still, life was not all bad. The quality of food at the *École militaire* was far superior to Brienne and, to a certain degree, the school aimed to create gentlemen. Napoleon's time at school would be brief; however, as Carlo would pass away on 24 February 1785 from stomach cancer. He left his wife and children nothing, nothing except a multitude of debts.

Historians vary on how they see Napoleon's life immediately following the death of his father. Dwyer writes, "Bounaparte took an active role in family affairs [...] Buonaparte seemed to be usurping his brother's position as head of the family [...] With the death of his father [...] he therefore graduated college after only one year."²⁷ Whereas, David Bell focuses on Napoleon after his graduation and commission to the artillery on

²⁵ Napoleon had been at school for a little more than four years, the navy required six years of study. He was fifteen when he left.

²⁶ Id. at 34.

²⁷ Id at 42.

September 1, 1785, “Yet after receiving his commission in 1785, he did not undertake anything like a dedicated professional career [...] like many of his peers, he spent more time on leave than with his regiment. Even when supposedly on duty, he favored solitary study over military business, whenever possible.”²⁸ Bell neglects the return to Corsica and familial ties provided by Dwyer and moves to create an earlier, French Napoleon. By connecting Napoleon with responsibilities in Corsica, though, Dwyer continues the narrative of the colonized Napoleonic person. Indeed, he drives home the relationship of Napoleon to Corsica by emphasizing that Napoleon “had the privilege of being the first Corsican to graduate from the *Ecole militaire* [sic],” and follows this anecdote with a section entitled “A Corsican in France, a Frenchman in Corsica”; thus, articulating the complex metamorphosis of Napoleon.²⁹

The Duchesse d’Abrantès, whose father apparently did not care for the Bounaparte family, consistently refers to Napoleon’s family as “the Corsicans” during this time period.³⁰ There is a certain sneering quality in the writing of d’Abrantès that is delightful for a reader but must have grated on Napoleon. Her recollections are at once so specific as to ring completely true; yet, her withering remarks give the reader pause and force questions about bias. D’Abrantès makes a great deal of Napoleon not being French. She writes of financial hardship caused by Carlo’s death and her family being benefactors to the Bonapartes. The significance of these events is to remind us that Napoleon and his

²⁸ David Bell, *The First Total War*, New York: Mariner, 2008. pp. 187.

²⁹ Op. cit.

³⁰ Laure Junot Abrantès, *Memoirs of the Duchess d’Abrantès (Madame Junot)*, New York: J. & J. Harper, 1832. pp. 47.

family were dependent on the goodwill and charity of the French state. Napoleon was in school by virtue of commission that came from the government – where his father had held a minor position. Letizia Buonaparte was forced to borrow money from d’Abrantès mother and, “When they got into the carriage, Napoleon, who had restrained his feelings from his sister, vented violent invectives against the detestable system of such establishments as Saint-Cyr and the military schools.”³¹ The otherness of his station was not only present in his dealings with other schoolmates. No. Napoleon would be constantly reminded that Corsica was not France: merely a possession of France. Still, he “accepted the Corscian identity thrust on him. Not only accepted it, but gloried in it.”³²

Awkwardness in social situations was a defining characteristic of Napoleon in the latter half of the 1780s. D’Abrantès provides details about when Napoleon first appeared in his dress uniform:

Je me rappelle que le jour où il endossa l’uniforme, il était joyeux comme tous les jeunes gens le sont à pareil jour; mais il avait dans son habillement une chose qui lui donnait une apparence fort ridicule, c’était ses bottes: elles étaient d’une dimension si singulièrement grande que ses petites jambes, alors fort grêles, disparaissaient dans leur ampleur. On sait que rien ne saisit le ridicule comme l’enfance; aussitôt que ma sœur et moi nous le vîmes entrer dans le salon avec ses deux jambes affublées de la sorte, nous ne pûmes nous contenir, et des rires fous s’ensuivirent. Alors, comme plus tard, il n’entendait pas la plaisanterie; dès qu’il se vit l’objet de notre hilarité; il se fâcha. Ma sœur, qui était plus grande que moi et beaucoup plus âgée (elle était ma marraine), lui répondit, toujours en riant, que puisqu’il ceignait, l’épée, il devait être le chevalier des dames, et qu’il était bien heureux qu’elles plaisantassent avec lui. «On voit bien que vous n’êtes qu’une petite pensionnaire, dit alors Napoléon d’un air

³¹ Id. at 52.

³² Harold T. Parker, “The Formation of Napoleon’s Personality: An Exploratory Essay,” *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Spring 1971), pp. 6-26. pp. 21.

dédaigneux.» Ma sœur avait alors douze à treize ans: on peut penser combien ce mot la blessa. Elle était fort douce: mais nous ne le sommes plus, nous autres femmes, quels que soient et notre âge et notre caractère habituel, lorsque notre vanité s'en mêle. Celle de Cécile fut blessée au vif de l'épithète de petite pensionnaire. «Et vous, répondit-elle à Bonaparte, vous n'êtes qu'un CHAT BOTTÉ.»³³

Napoleon became a lieutenant in the French army in January of 1786. His uniform, which he took such pride in, was deep blue and had red facing; there was gold trim, epaulettes, and buttons with his regiment's number embossed upon them. Even though he took part in society functions and sometimes had flirtations with young women, he was mostly a loner.³⁴ At night he preferred to return to his stark room and read. Remarkable to our study is that Napoleon saw fit to read, more than a few times, the Abbé Raynal's lengthy *Histoire philosophiques et politiques des établissements et du commerce dan les Indes*. "At the tender age of seventeen, Napoleon wrote Raynal [...] 'I am not yet eighteen, but I am already a writer, this an age which one must learn.' [...]"

³³ Laure Junot duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires complets et authentiques : De Laure Junot duchesse d'Abrantès. Souvenirs historiques sur Napoléon, la Révolution, le Directoire, le Consulat, l'Empire, la Restauration*, Tome Premier, Quatrième édition, Bruxelles: Société Belge de Librairie, Imprimerie, etc., 1837. pp. 29. English Translation, "I well recollect that on the day when he first put on his uniform, he was as vain as young men usually are on such an occasion. There was one part of his dress which had a very amusing appearance; that was his boots. They were so high and wide that his little thin legs seemed buried in their amplitude. Young people are always ready to observe anything ridiculous; and as soon as my sister and I saw Napoleon enter the drawing room, we burst into a loud fit of laughter. At that early age, as well as later in life, Bonaparte could not relish a joke; and when he found himself the object of merriment, he grew angry. My sister, who was some years older than I, told him that since he wore a sword, he out to be gallant to ladies; and instead of being angry should be happy that they joked with him. – 'You are nothing but a child – a little *pensionnaire*,' said Napoleon, in a tone of contempt, Cecile who was twelve or thirteen years of age, was highly indignant at being called a child; and she hastily resented the affront, by replying to Bonaparte: – 'And you are nothing but a puss in boots.'"

³⁴ Napoleon spent the better part of 1786 in Corsica but returned to Paris in 1787. He even attended the court at Versailles – arriving by the unfashionable "coaches of the court." There is an amusing and somewhat telling story of Napoleon's interaction with a prostitute during this stay in Paris on 22 November, 1787 which can be found in Frédéric Masson and Guido Biagi, *Napoléon, manuscrits inédits, 1786-1791*, Paris: Société d'Éditions Littéraires et Artistique, 1908. pp. 21-3.

Raynal encouraged his young acolyte, ‘impressed by the breadth of his knowledge.’”³⁵ An unfinished history of Corsica was what Napoleon had sent to Raynal for judgement. Dwyer supposes, “that Buonaparte identified with the anti-colonial themes running through [Raynal’s] book. Raynal, therefore, may have provided Buonaparte with the intellectual ammunition he needed to help formulate his own ideas about France and Corsica.”³⁶ It is remarkable to consider that 4800 miles apart Napoleon and Belley were being inspired by the same man from the country that held dominion over them. Both men with a future exalted in politics and the military would feel the pangs of French colonialism. Both men would suffer for their complexions during the time of the revolution in spite of the republican call for brotherhood. Like the slaves and free men of color in St. Domingue, Napoleon would dream of rebellion. He wrote to Paoli voicing his feelings about the hostile takeover of Corsica by the French, “Général, je naquis quand la patrie périssait. Trente mille Français vomis sur nos côtes, noyant le trône de la liberté dan des flots de sang, tel fut le spectacle odieux qui vint le premier frapper mes regards.”³⁷

Thus it is fitting that, as France descended into revolution, Napoleon made his way back to Corsica. Napoleon would not be the only one to find that France and the revolution extended across the sea and, as early as 1789, others all over Europe would wait and wonder as the unbelievable unfolded. Félix de Romain, a fellow French officer

³⁵ Andrew Martin, *Napoleon the Novelist*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000. pp. 13

³⁶ Dwyer, 46.

³⁷ François-René Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d’Outre-Tombe*, Tome I, New York: P. Arpin, 1848. pp. 365.

in Corsica at the time, wrote, “En arrivant en Corse, j’y retrouvai les mêmes individus que j’y avois laissés; mais le ton et l’humeur de la société avoient bien changé [...] On avoit constamment les yeux fixés sur la mer, dans l’espérance de voir arriver un bâtiment porteur des dépêches de France; on s’attendoit chaque jour à apprendre une révolution.”³⁸

The first meeting since 1614 years of the *Estates générales* prompted much of the political and social curiosity of events in France. May 4, 1789 seemed as though it would be a day of real change for the Third Estate. That was until they saw the seating arrangement which, when it was designed in 1614, sought to enforce societal hierarchies not to promote equality.

Jacques Necker, the king’s finance minister, was largely responsible for mobilizing the Third Estate during this turbulent time.³⁹ Louis XVI’s policies had been erratic at best. This fact is strongly evidenced by his relationship to Necker himself. Forced into retirement in 1784, Necker was recalled into the service of the king in 1788 to save France from financial collapse.⁴⁰ He had already prevented rebellion in Dauphiné. As the weeks passed Louis and his court felt Necker was being deliberately aloof towards reconciliation. In reality Necker simply lacked the necessary political savvy.

³⁸ Félix de Romain, *Souvenirs d’Un Officier Royaliste*, Vol. II, Paris: Égron, 1824. pp. 13

³⁹ Necker was hugely popular amongst The Third Estate largely due to his 1781 *Compte rendu au roi* which detailed the finances of the monarchy for the first time in French history.

⁴⁰ Necker most prominent foe was none other than Marie Antoinette. Necker sought to bring in new revenue by reforming the tax code which was rejected by Louis. Between 1784 and 1787, Necker published extensively including his *Traité de l’administration des finances de la France* as well as a series of pamphlets critiquing his successors; the latter caused him to be banished from Paris for a year. Notably, Necker was the father of Madame de Staël.

Meanwhile, bread prices skyrocketed. Riots in the streets of Paris. On June 10, 1789 the Third estate took matters into its own hands. Originally an attempt to conjoin the three Estates the move by the Third Estate was pure politics. Testing the waters, the representatives wanted to see who would ally by seeking to verify each delegate. Honoré Mirabeau, a noble, and Abbé Sieyès, a clergyman, attempted to liaise on behalf of the Third Estate. Now calling themselves the *Communes*, the common man were gaining support – autocracy was waning. Louis began to panic when on June 17 the *Communes* moved and resolved to form a National Assembly.

The last chance for the monarchy to put itself at the head of the Third Estate qua ‘national assembly’ came and went when, under pressure from his brother the comte d’Artois, the queen, and the archbishop of Paris – who saw the Third Estate as full of ‘philosophies’ – the king provoked the National Assembly into explicit acts of sovereignty by belatedly reaffirming the separate rights of the three orders in return for ceding his fiscal sovereignty to the Estates-General.⁴¹

Arriving at the *Salle des États* on June 20, 1789 the delegates found that not only was the meeting hall closed, but armed guards stood around the perimeter. The king had ordered the Third Estate to disperse. Not deterred, the Assembly moved to the king’s own *jeu de paume*. There they took the Tennis Court Oath and with it “responsibility to respect the ‘national’ debt and vowed to ‘fix’ the nation’s ‘constitution.’”⁴²

Louis reacted to these events with great fits of pique. In what was beginning to resemble a comedy of manners, the tennis court where the Assembly was meeting was

⁴¹ Thomas E. Kaiser and Dale K. Van Kley, “From Old Regime to French Revolution,” *From Deficit to Deluge: The Origins of the French Revolution*, ed. Thomas E. Kaiser and Dale K. Van Kley, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011. pp. 268.

⁴² Id. at 269.

closed after two days and so the group – now joined by a large number of the clergy and some nobles – moved to the nearby Church of St. Louis. June 23 the king held a *séance royale* attempting to quell the acts of the Assembly simply by asserting royal authority. Indeed, “on the night of 22 June the king was persuaded to dismiss Necker and overawe the National Assembly by display of military force. The plot misfired: thousands invaded the courtyard of the palace to demand that Necker be retained [...] soldiers [...] refused to obey the command to fire; and the deputies, rallied by Mirabeau [...] refused to disperse. The king was compelled to yield.”⁴³ Prudence, though, was not a virtue which Louis XVI possessed. Less than three weeks after showing contrition and submission to the general will the king made an egregious mistake of once again sending Necker into exile.⁴⁴

News of Necker’s fall would take one day to travel to Paris. Already on that Sunday morning, Parisians had noticed increased numbers of troops being placed around the city. Camille Desmoulins, who is described as “un jeune avocat inconnu,” is said to have mounted a table outside the café du Foy and crying out to all nearby who would listen:

Citoyens, il n’ya pas un moment à perdre: j’arrive de Versailles; M. Necker est renvoyé. C’est le tocsin d’une Saint-Barthélemy de patriotes; tous les bataillons suisses et allemands vont sortir de leurs camps pour nous égorger. Il ne nous reste qu’une ressource, c’est de courir aux armes et de prendre des cocardes pour nous reconnaître. Quelle couleur voulez-vous? Est-ce le vert, couleur de l’espérance, ou le bleu, couleur de la démocratie en Amérique? Le vert, couleur de l’espérance! Amis, le

⁴³ George Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959. pp. 47.

⁴⁴ Engravings of the time often show Necker as almost sainted. Even internationally Necker had a strong reputation as liberator. See James Gillray’s engraving from 1789.

signal est donné; voici les espions de la police qui me regardent et me menacent; je ne tomberai pas du moins vivant entre leurs mains.⁴⁵

A bust of Necker was paraded through the streets. Perhaps the first militant clash of the revolution occurred at the Place Louis XV where rioters met troops under the command of Prince de Lambesec. Looters began to seek out food and precious metals as the day wore on, but as night surrounded Paris a new goal was taken up by the mob: weapons and gunpowder.

Besieged, the *Hôtel de Ville* and the *Hôtel des Invalides* yielded up artillery on July 14, 1789, when the crowd of less than one thousand, led by Amaria Cahila, arrived at the Bastille. 30,000 pounds of gunpowder was the prize. Negotiations did take place. But the crowd grew restless as morning turned into afternoon. By two o'clock the outer drawbridge's chains had been severed and intense fighting erupted. Cannon fire blasted from both sides of the conflict. The Royal Army, who were nearby at the *Champs de Mars*, either ignored the conflict or were deliberately held back. Some of the *gardes françaises* defected and joined the rabble. Bernard-René de Launay, the governor of the Bastille, attempted to surrender.⁴⁶ He lowered the inner drawbridge, effectively surrendering the fortress to the multitude and – for his efforts of diplomacy – he was beaten, stabbed, lynched, shot, bayoneted, and finally beheaded.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Nicolas Villiaumé, *Histoire de la Révolution française de 1789-1796*, Paris: Marescq, 1851. pp. 54-55.

⁴⁶ His demands were not met with approval even as he threatened to explode all of the gunpowder within the Bastille.

⁴⁷ The decapitation of Launay would be done with a saw by Mathieu Jourdan, a butcher.

Reflecting on France from Corsica, Napoleon stated, “[the] craziness about the French Revolution is that those who once put us to death as rebels are today our protectors.”⁴⁸ Napoleon, along with his brother Giuseppe (Joseph), took the French Revolution as a political opportunity to assert themselves into what was seemingly their legacy: Corsican politics. Taking a French populist view, Napoleon’s end goal was such to appeal to the National Assembly for Corsican independence.⁴⁹ Worth noting at this point is the fact that Napoleon still sees himself as a Corsican and genuinely desires to participate in the liberation of the island.⁵⁰ To be sure, there was a great deal of personal gain to be had; yet, the fact remained that even as a French soldier and as a man who had lived abroad for the better part of his life Napoleon still felt stronger ties to Corsica and a Corsican identity than to France and a French identity. Moreover, his 1789 *Nouvelle Corse* leaves little to the imagination about how he feels towards what he sees as a French occupation of his homeland.⁵¹

The island itself was factionalized into three parts: those loyal to royalist causes, those still loyal to Paoli, and a younger generation of liberals. Napoleon sided with the Paolists. Seeing political difficulty in maintaining Corsica as it was the National Assembly, under the influence of Constantin Volney and Raquetta de Mirabeau, opted to

⁴⁸ Quoted in Englund, 39.

⁴⁹ François Gilbert de Coston, *Biographie des premières années de Bonaparte*, 2 vols., Paris: Marc Aurel, 1840. ii. pp. 94-99.

⁵⁰ See Dwyer, 66: “‘Cast a glance,’ he pleads, ‘on our unfortunate country. Alas, naked, despoiled, depopulated, awash in the blood of its martyrs, we see it strewn with men who, in their enthusiasm, have sacrificed everything for the price of freedom.’”

⁵¹ Frédéric Masson and Guido Biagi, *Napoléon Inconnu, papiers inédits 1769-1793*, 2 vols., Paris: Ollendorff, 1895. See Volume II, pp. 75-83. Also see further analysis of *Nouvelle Corse* in Martin, 39 and Dwyer, 63.

integrate Corsica into the French state. Thus, the young would be appeased with new opportunities they had previously been denied – save exceptional cases – and amnesty would be granted to those who had previously been exiled. Paoli's return to Corsica from England by way of a year long tour of France was a triumph both politically and personally: "Arriving in Paris on 3 April 1789, he was feted [sic] and celebrated as a revolutionary martyr, introduced to Parisian society by the Marquis de Lafayette, praised by Maximilien Robespierre and even presented to Louis XVI. On 22 April 1790, he appeared before the National Assembly and swore obedience and fidelity to the French people."⁵² The parallels between Corsica and St. Domingue are rather striking. Corsica's appeasement and St. Domingue's absolution both were ultimately political moves by the new French government. Peace could no more have been kept in Corsica than the inevitable uprisings in St. Domingue. Political alacrity and nimbleness allowed for France to keep possession of its territories while espousing its philosophical ideals to the world. Napoleon, however, was determined to make his mark in the world and be of service to the Corsican rebellion that had ended a year before his birth. Taking additional medical leave, Napoleon sought to emulate his Jacobin brothers and the efforts of those who had seized the Bastille. His target was the fortress at Ajaccio. He had not counted on no one supporting him. Suddenly it became dangerous for Napoleon to walk the streets of Corsica alone.

Nothing could be stronger in juxtaposition than the actions of Napoleon, who had long since adopted the persona of a radical Jacobin and the ever politic Paoli. Failure

⁵² Op. cit. 67.

after failure stalked the twenty-two year old Napoleon. Whereas, the elder statesmen took the opportunity of his heralded return to call for a congress at Orezza. The congress was convinced to elect four new delegates to send to Paris: the delegates were either relatives of Paoli or close friends. Moreover, Paoli was to be the commander of the Coriscan National Guard with a yearly pension of 50,000 livres. Napoleon, while still an officer in the French army, opted to use sick leave to be a mere private in the Ajaccio National Guard. Moreover, Paoli, who had been Napoleon's youthful idol, had no interest in him. In no small way, Paoli worried that Napoleon would tarnish his reputation and endanger the plans he had for Corsica.⁵³ Napoleon did take away lessons from his time in Corsica, "He was to see Paoli and his followers use violence and intrigue to get rid of opponents, he was to see Paoli break the law on any number of occasions in order to get his way, and he was to see Paoli welcomed as a charismatic hero, cheered and fêted wherever he went."⁵⁴ In February of 1791 Napoleon returned to France.

June of 1791 brought with it the promotion of Napoleon to first lieutenant. He was to report to the artillery regiment at Valence. Though, in what will historically prove to be a great irony, Napoleon was displeased with his advancement as he would have to have his new uniforms altered to reflect his current station.⁵⁵ His time in Valence was not entirely unpleasant. Much as in Corsica he found argument to be a suitable outlet for his frustration. Firmly dedicated to the revolutionary cause he clashed – sometimes in good

⁵³ Englund, 40-47.

⁵⁴ Dwyer, 71.

⁵⁵ Masson and Biaggi, i, 387.

humor and sometime not – with other officers over political beliefs earning him the nickname “the little Jacobin.”⁵⁶ But, as always was the case, Corsica lived in his mind. Granted three months leave he returned to the island in an attempt to obtain the political office of lieutenant colonel of the Corsican guards. Once more a failed attempt at seizing the Ajaccio fortress ensued and, once more, Napoleon faltered. Worse yet he was missing from his post and, by May of 1792, he found himself once again in Paris.

Revolution had many consequences in France. Napoleon was fortunate in that, while the Minister of War wanted him courtmartialled, the Justice Minister was far too overworked. Moreover, those troops who were loyal to the crown had long since deserted. Thus, Napoleon achieved, in spite of himself, what he so desired: advancement.⁵⁷ “The political tribunals at the club of the Jacobins, as that of the Cordeliers, became aware of the necessity of facilitating the moral transformation of the army in order to form citizens. Rejecting his previous analyses, Marat took advantage of the reorganization of the *Garde Nationale*.”⁵⁸ Would Napoleon fall into this new idealized model of Enlightenment soldier who would be a “soldier-citizen, conscious of the reasons for his combat, of what he is defending”?⁵⁹ Napoleon would first have to see what the country was to become before he would fully commit.

⁵⁶ Asprey, 48.

⁵⁷ Napoleon was promoted to captain with orders to remain in Paris.

⁵⁸ Jean-Paul Bertaud, “The Revolutionary Role of the Army: To Regenerate Man, to Form a Model Citizen, a Model for Civil Society?,” in *Culture and Revolution: Cultural Ramifications of the French Revolution*, ed., George Levitine, College Park: University of Maryland, 1989, 18-39. pp. 20-21.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Even though Corsica still preyed on his mind, the politics of France in 1792 seemed agreeable to Napoleon's disposition.⁶⁰ 1792 can be regarded as a singular year in France and for Napoleon. The first known portrait of the young captain was done by a faded artistic star: Jean-Baptiste Greuze. As Anita Brookner points out there would be a continued relationship between the two men even as Greuze's financial situation steadily deteriorated leaving Greuze to "beg" for urgent financial help:

For in 1801 he wrote to Napoleon that he was starving: 'Le tableau que je fais le gouvernement est à moitié fini. La situation dans laquelle je me trouve me force de vous prier de donner les ordres pour que je touche encore un acompte et que je puisse le terminer. J'ai eu l'honneur de vous faire part de tous mes malheurs. J'ai tout perdu hors le talent et le courage, J'ai soixante-quinze ans, pas un seul ouvrage de commande. De m'avie, je n'ai eu un moment aussi difficile à passer. Vous avez le cœur bon. Je me flatte que vous aurez égards à mes peines, le plus tôt possible, car il y a urgence.'⁶¹

In his 1792 portrait, Greuze depicts an earnest young man. Sepia tones of the scumbled background dissolve into Napoleon's hair, eyes, sallow skin, and scarf. Greuze's deft touch for the domestic is written everywhere within the portrait. One would never suppose the young man here to be capable of political machinations; moreover, the heights Napoleon would reach are nowhere foretold within this canvas. Still, the commissioning of a portrait of himself wearing his French captain's uniform shows that, by 1792, Napoleon was beginning to see himself and wanting the world to see him as

⁶⁰ See Dwyer, 82 and Englund, 49.

⁶¹ Anita Brookner, "Jean-Baptiste Greuze - II," *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 98, no. 639 (June 1956), pp. 192-197+199. pp. 199.

French.⁶² Later I will discuss Greuze's 1801 portrait where we see the First Consul Napoleon in contrast with similar portraits by Ingres and Gros. For now let us return to the early history of Napoleon's life as we compose a portrait from historical narrative.

On April 20, 1792, France declared war on Austria. A war "which would eventually engulf all the European monarchies and would not end until the battle of Waterloo twenty-three years later."⁶³ War with Austria certainly seemed justifiable, Leopold II was Marie Antoinette's brother and Austria was where the royal family had tried to escape to the year prior. Indeed, the queen more than the king was the source of popular ire and no small amount of xenophobia. "Marie-Antoinette, who was vilified even before 1789 in pornographic caricatures that portrayed her as sexually promiscuous [...] the queen's presumed sexual promiscuity called into question the basis of the regime [...] if the paternity of the king's heirs was in question, so was the notion of hereditary kingship itself."⁶⁴ The enemies of the monarchy would continue their efforts long after the death of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette – this fact can be seen in the 1798 etching *Ma Constitution* where the queen is exposing herself to Lafayette and allowing him to "put his hand on the center of power."⁶⁵

Napoleon would witness the grotesque in the spectacle of the king's body in 1792.

Illustrations like *Nouveau Pacte de Louis XVI* served as visual castration of the king.

⁶² Asprey, 63: "Perhaps he recognized himself as an ideological orphan who would be necessarily adrift in France during the coming consolidation of the revolution.

⁶³ Dwyer, 92.

⁶⁴ Lynn Hunt, "The Political Psychology of Revolutionary Caricatures," in *French Caricature and the French Revolution, 1789-1799*, ed. Lynn Hockman, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988, 33-40. pp. 37.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

Here we see Louis wearing the red cap of liberty – taking the place of the crown – and drinking to the health of the new nation. His new status is that of a perverse symbol of both the old regime and the times to come. On June 20, 1792, Napoleon and Bourrienne witnessed, “a mob, which Bonaparte calculated at five or six thousand men [...] all in rags, ludicrously armed with weapons of every description, and were proceeding hastily towards the Tuileries.”⁶⁶ Louis emerged at one of the upper windows, bedecked as in his caricature, causing Napoleon to exclaim, “Che coglione! [that asshole].”⁶⁷ Napoleon would further wonder aloud to his friend, ““Why have they let in all that rabble! They should sweep off four or five hundred of them with the cannon; the rest would then set off fast enough.”⁶⁸ These words would prove prophetic and inverted soon enough as, in four years, Napoleon would himself be the first military figure to turn cannons on a mob in the streets of Paris. Ironically, it will be a monarchist mob who Napoleon would mow down, not a throng of *sans culottes*. Furthermore, the treatment of the body of the king as well as iconoclasts destroying the effigies of Bourbon monarchs reverberated in Napoleon’s own rejection of public monuments to himself. His paranoia would grow to such extremes that he would have secret police spy on those viewing paintings where he

⁶⁶ Bourrienne, 16. Dwyer and Englund date this event on August 10, 1792; however, Asprey and Bourrienne state that it was on June 20 – it is likely that the former set are conflating two separate, yet, similar incidents. The date of June 20 makes sense as it is the anniversary of the Tennis Court Oath and corresponds with the date on the caricature, *Nouveau Pacte de Louis XVI* which seems to allude to the demonstration at the Palais des Tuileries where the king and his family were being held. Worth noting as well is the Duchamp-like quality of engraving of the king *Louis seize* from 1775 and the print of the same name from 1792 where the only difference is that a red cap has been placed on his head. Art reflects life as it is unclear if the cap was willingly placed or not.

⁶⁷ Id. at 17. *coglione* literally means balls and can be taken to mean dickhead as well as asshole but, as a form of slang, never has positive connotations. The contemporary use of the terms means asshole or the most vulgar way of calling someone an idiot.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

was featured and report back to him daily about what the public was saying. This would not only serve to inform Napoleon of possible traitors but to help him articulate better what his image should be. Artists of the time would have to submit to creating Napoleonic propaganda pieces lest they lose favor and the possibility for commissions.

On October 10, 1792, Napoleon returned to Corsica yet again plotting. Using his sister as his pawn – the school at St. Cyr had closed and thus he petitioned to escort her home – he reinstated himself as deputy commander in Ajaccio immediately upon his return. Napoleon was repeating himself and this time Paoli was onto him from the outset. “The return of this ‘brat without experience,’ as he privately referred to Buonaparte, displeased him to the extent that earlier he had ordered Colonel Colonna to have nothing to do with ‘the rogue Napoleon.’”⁶⁹ Napoleon was busying himself, however, with elaborate battle plans to capture Sardinia. Paoli was acting against him though. Colonna was told to stop the venture at whatever cost.⁷⁰ The cost, as it would happen, would be very high for all involved. Paoli’s reputation in France was flagging already as it was. Sardinia had been a lost cause before the battle had even started. And by July of 1793 the Buonaparte family found itself in Toulon, exiled from their homeland.

This time though Napoleon was in the right place at the right time. On September 16, 1793 he had gone to Nice on official duty, escorting gunpowder, when he decided to visit Antoine Christophe Saliceti, a fellow Corsican. Toulon was the site of a royalist uprising and troops from Spain and England had arrived to help occupy the city and quell

⁶⁹ Asprey, 65.

⁷⁰ Iung, ii., 354.

the hopes of a strong French navy. Elzear Donmartin, the chief artillery officer under General Jean François Carteaux, had been wounded previously on September 7 when the army took the village of Ollioules.⁷¹ Saliceti spoke in favor of Napoleon and he was given the post, “We had some heavy artillery in front of Marseille, but i was bad condition The wounding of Dammartin has left us without any chief-of-artillery. Chance has served us marvellously [sic]: we have retained the citizen Bounaparte, a trained captain, who was on his way to the Army of Italy, and have ordered him to replace Dommartin.”⁷² Napoleon would rise to the occasion. Within short order he organized two artillery batteries – *La Montagne* and *Sans Culottes* – and wrote to the Committee of Public Safety complaining of the incompetence of Carteaux. Saliceti arranged for the elderly but competent General Jacques Dugommier to take command of the artillery; thus, making it independent of Carteaux’s command. Now, under the command of Saliceti, Dugommier, and Bonaparte the army made its final push on December 17:

Five days and nights of an artillery barrage [...Napoleon] fought on foot in the final assault and was bayoneted in the left calf [...] Captain Marmont turned the guns around to fire on the retreated defenders while the French infantry regrouped to continue the action. The vicious assault however had caused the defenders of l’Eguillette and Balaguier to run away, leaving their guns unspiked. A jubilant Napoleon was setting up reverse batteries in the two positions when he learned that General Lapoype’s attack had captured Mt. Faron defenses. ‘Tomorrow,’ he told his men, ‘at the latest the day after, we shall take supper at Toulon.’⁷³

⁷¹ Dwyer, 134-135.

⁷² Walter Geer, *Napoleon and His Family: The Story of a Corsican Clan, Corsica - Madrid (1769-1809)*, New York: Brentano’s, 1927. pp. 32.

⁷³ Asprey, 88.

Forts Mulgrave, Eguilette, and Balaquier had been captured and Admiral Hood ordered the British troops to retreat from the port of Toulon.⁷⁴ Over the course of three months Napoleon rose in stature and esteem. Promoted during the battle to colonel and after to Brigadier General at the age of twenty-four.

“Josephine”

A phantom haunting the woods of Malmaison. That is the thought which enters the mind when looking upon Pierre-Paul Prud'hon's portrait *Empress Josephine at Malmaison*. Neither chalk nor lead nor powder could will the skin the tonality which Prud'hon produces here. A brooding melancholy pervades the scene as towering trees blot the sun from the sky. Josephine's ghostly presence registers as if for an instant. A blood red cloth wraps around her æthereal body. Saturated with color the cloak is all that grounds her to the very earth upon which she rests. When I look at this portrait I see the woman in the mind of Napoleon. The one who he lusted and obsessed over while in Italy. Here is the shade of Josephine which threatened to destroy Napoleon's rise to power.⁷⁵ An extraordinarily complete work for Prud'hon, we are shown elements which comprise the empress – her love for her garden as indicated by the *Josephinia imperatricis* in the foreground – and quiet introversion. Long gone are the flirtations of the 1790s, what remains is the ideal woman which Josephine could never be for Napoleon.

⁷⁴ Id. at 140. As a result of the victory by the republican army the monarchist in the area suffered extreme retribution known as The Suppression. The area was purged as part of The Terror of undesirable types who held anti-Republican sentiment. Paul Barras and Stanislas Fréron led the charge.

⁷⁵ Englund 93-96.

Born Marie Josèph Rose Tascher de La Pagerie on 23 June 1763 to a wealthy Creole plantation family, Josephine would be sixteen years old before ever leaving the island of Martinique. Her aunt had arranged a marriage with her lover's son to help secure the family's fortune which had been strained following a devastating hurricane in 1766. Alexandre Beauharnais would marry Josephine on 13 December 1779. Her marriage produced two children – Eugène and Hortense – and would last almost fifteen years. Alexandre and Josephine both were arrested during the Terror and Alexandre was guillotined on 23 July 1794. Fearing for her life, Robespierre's fall was a tremendous stroke of luck for Josephine. Five days later she would be freed from prison and one year later, thanks to new civil laws, she was able to claim Alexandre's properties. That same year she would make the acquaintance of General Bonaparte who was six years younger than her. Napoleon's attraction was instant. And, indeed, there are a fair number of similarities between Napoleon and Josephine: ambition, both hailing from island colonies of France, and both being described as possessing sallow skin. The art that exists of her comes from after her marriage to Napoleon and mostly after her coronation as Empress. Nonetheless, there is something transformative about the artwork. In this section I will explain a process of whitening which occurs with Josephine and also, as we shall see, with Napoleon. Though the process which Napoleon will undergo will have deeper allegorical roots, the presentation of skin will be no less visually shocking for the viewer.

Three painters tackle the sallow coloring of Josephine's skin but do so in a surreptitious manner. Jean-Antoine Laurent's 1806 portrait (basks the empress in warm

light. He foregrounds the painting with dark drapery and gives her face the same soft focus which he lends to the background. Laurent's portrait seems to be echoing Gros' portrait of Napoleon as First Consul, which I will discuss in greater detail later. The red jacket which extends well below her knees is at once the same as Napoleon's and true to the Troubadour style which she heavily favored.⁷⁶ Gérard, ever detail oriented in his portraiture, does not disappoint. His 1808 portrait is a study in detail and, to no smaller extent, color and skin. Josephine's silk dress clings to her svelte frame. Indeed, with regards to silk we find, "Of all the industries of France, few were as close to the emperor's heart as the textile *fabriques* of Lyon."⁷⁷ Carefully embroidered upon the gown are Napoleon's gold bees which swarm about Josephine, making her at once a queen bee and a hive of the empire. The adoption of bees, or actually golden cicadas, into the Napoleonic aesthetic myth was an attempt to link his lineage to that of Childeric I, the found of the Merovingian dynasty circa 457. Childrec has a great deal of commonality with Napoleon with regard to empire. His capital was in Tournai (present day Belgium) and he was allied with the Romans. Childrec's tomb was discovered in 1653 and within were three hundred golden bees. The Habsurgs had gifted the collection to Louis XIV who, being thoroughly unimpressed, had them stored in the library. Childrec's bees were therefore significantly older than the Bourbon *fleur-de-lys* which dated to Clovis I who was the son of Childrec.

⁷⁶ Carol Solomon Kiefer, *The Empress Josephine: Art and Royal Identity*, Amherst: Amherst College, 2005. pp. 41.

⁷⁷ Jean Coural and Chantal Gastinel-Coural, "Silk from Lyon During the Empire," in *The Age of Napoleon: Costume From Revolution to Empire 1789 - 1815*, ed. Katell le Bourhis, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989. pp. 149.

Truly, though, the extraordinary feature of Josephine in Gérard's portrait is her skin. To see it properly we must first train our eyes on the maroon and brown of the background. Next, the eye slowly traces the line around her body: not the parts which are clothed but her right arm, neck, and face. We see at once a variation in shadowing. Around Josephine's clothing, which can be seen best at her right side, shadowing and line are done in black. Around Josephine's body shadowing is done in brown. As we move more to the center of her face the milky effects of her makeup and the intensity of light shining directly on her overtake the chocolate halo surrounding her body. Madame de Rémusat recalled the then Josephine Beauharnais, "had very little fortune, and her taste for dress and luxury rendered her dependent on those who could aid her to indulge it. Without being precisely pretty, she possessed many personal charms. Her features were delicate, her expression was sweet; her mouth was very small, and concealed her bad teeth; her complexion was rather dark, but with the help of skillfully applied red and white she remedied that defect."⁷⁸ The competing image for Josephine, of course, was that of Juliette Récamier.

The false whiteness in paintings of Josephine is not apparent to me until I compare her to Madame Récamier. This contrast is made easier for us in that Gérard painted both women and put both against a similar burnt red cloth background. In general, Gérard is more sensitive to the contours and physical frame of women. He is exceptional by comparison with his master David and other students from David's studio.

⁷⁸ Madame de Rémusat, *Memoirs of Madame de Rémusat: 1802-1808*, two volumes, trans. Cashel Hoey and John Lillie, London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1880. pp. I 34.

Indeed, Ingres and Girodet paint women at best possessing a Rococo-like form and, at worst, as men. For his part Girodet often paints men in a far more feminine manner than his women.⁷⁹ And though Gérard is a master of the feminine touch, Josephine's age works against her and use of heavy powder is further exacerbated when contrasted with the fresh and vivacious Récamier. Innocence and purity are reflexed in the simplicity with which Récamier presented herself not only for her portrait but in her day to day life. Though she was perhaps the richest woman in Paris at the time of the painting she and her husband were rather modest in their lifestyle. Contrast this with Napoleon's desire to present grand visuals which were carefully coordinated and Josephine's penchant for luxury and the two portraits by Gérard make even more sense. Récamier limits herself to one piece of jewelry: an exotic hair pin. Josephine's jewelry is that of an empress. And it is the excess which betrays her. The tonal contrast is so between the pearls and her skin that the pearls appear to be darker and to hover around her but not rest against her body. This, to say the least, is not natural.

Looking to David's *Le Sacre* for a moment we find Josephine at the moment of becoming majesty. Todd Potterfield writes, "Josephine exhibits a made-up face; an eyebrow that is smooth and consistent in color and thickness, ideally curved, especially when compared with the irregular and spotty eyebrow over the hooded eye of the emperor. Her rose cheeks provide a contrasting background for the purity of her pearl earrings, which though magnificent, cannot approach the pale whiteness of her skin."⁸⁰

⁷⁹ See *Endymion* versus *The Night of Danaë* for example.

⁸⁰ Todd Potterfield, "David's *Sacre*," *Staging Empire: Napoleon, Ingres, and David*, University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2006. pp. 166.

We have already established that there was a reliance by Josephine upon makeup. Whether that was for hiding her age or race or simply for beauty cannot be known. There is something remarkable, though, in considering the idea of makeup and paint. David is charged with the creation of *Le Sacre* and chooses to paint Josephine's face, and thereby makeup, in such a way as to comment upon how heavily masked her face is. Paint as makeup compounds the concealing effects that makeup alone would have. Her skin becomes too perfect as empress. Within the Napoleonic regime of controlled aesthetics, though, this makes perfect sense. Josephine is "corrected" in terms of the pan-European – the makeup hides her colonial body in a type of extreme whiteface – and therefore she is more acceptable to come into contact with the body of the emperor. By virtue of becoming empress she must be perfected from her earlier form because of her new social role and responsibility. This further underscores the lack of a hereditary child between the couple. Josephine's body is being put in close and dangerous historical proximity to that of Marie Antoinette. With an established negative reputation dating back only a few years and had yet to produce a son, David's Josephine must have felt extraordinarily claustrophobic when surrounded by her sisters-in-law and under the eyes of Madame Mère.

The final contrast in our brief study of Josephine is perhaps the most revealing and most unnerving. Adrea Appiani's 1808 portrait *Joséphine de Beauharnais* and Appiani's 1807 portrait *Joséphine the Queen of Italy*. We notice immediately that the later portrait is trying to project Josephine to a pre-Napoleon time in her life. The visual commentary as well as style are more radical in this portrait than the one of her as queen.

Like Gérard, Appiani resolves the issue of skin by surrounding Josephine with yellows, golds, and browns making his portrait almost completely sepia in tone. Josephine is shown as younger, her hair cascading down around her face and neck in ringlets. There is a theatrical quality to Appiani's portrait that recalls female tragedians. A transformation occurs in Appiani's depiction of Josephine when he paints her in the robes of state. I will soon discuss the second coronation of Napoleon in Milan, however, we see Josephine wrapped in a green velvet robe that has been embroidered with gold and has a crown and floral motif throughout which will match the one which Napoleon wears.⁸¹ When comparing the costumes that Appiani shows Napoleon and Josephine, not to mention his complete fabrication of the Iron Crown of Lombardy, it becomes clear that the artist did not have the same access to the royal vestments that French artists had. What becomes even more apparent when looking at works by Appiani in 1808 and 1809 is his inspiration by Ingres which I will discuss shortly. Nonetheless, in the 1807 portrait of Josephine, Appiani places her in a silk dress that has pearl trim matching her crown and the pearl braiding in her hair. Her mouth is drawn very tight. This along with her large eyebrows is the only feature which seem consistent from portrait to portrait. Again, she is shown eggshell white with a hint of rouge on her cheeks. She gives the impression of a porcelain doll. The longer we stare at the portrait the more unclear it becomes which is whiter: the pearls, the silk, or Josephine's skin. Appiani uses the same effect as in *Le Sacre*. Coronation into the new French Empire appears to have the same effect as

⁸¹ Napoleon's Italian coronation robe still exists at the Museo del Risorgimento in Milan; whereas, his French vestments were either destroyed or sold after his fall.

transubstantiation or alchemy. This time, however, it is of the skin: turning sallow into white.

I began this section with a discussion of Pierre-Paul Prud'hon's portrait *Empress Josephine at Malmaison* where I compared her to a ghost haunting the gardens of Malmaison. Josephine had avoided divorce once with Napoleon after vowing her devotion to him despite her many affairs. And, indeed, she had kept to her word. Still, she had not produced an heir. On 30 November 1809 Napoleon informed Josephine that he would divorce her. Englund writes:

After the simple ceremony in the mayor's office, on the rue d'Antin thirteen years before, then the incredible *faste* of the Notre Dame coronation, here they now sat side by side in the Tuileries on a sad December day in 1809, reading his and her prepared statements. Josephine had long seen it coming – they all had; she implicitly understood the need for Sire to sire, and thus to remarry. In return for her dignified acceptance of the inevitable, she retained Malmaison, the title of Empress, and an outsized civil list. Their friendship, annealed by this sacrifice, endured to her death.⁸²

Josephine would spend her final four years at Malmaison, much as we see her in Prud'hon portrait. She had purchased the estate in 1799 while Napoleon was in Egypt and had greatly invested in its gardens. Indeed, she passed away on 29 May 1814 after catching cold following a walk in her garden with Tsar Alexander.

Within a month of his divorce Napoleon had already found his new wife: Maria Ludovica Leopoldina Franziska Therese Josepha Lucia von Habsburg-Lothringen. The marriage to Marie Louise was meant to produce a male heir for Napoleon. However, one cannot overlook the fact that the marriage also made Napoleon great nephew to Louis

⁸² Englund 359.

XVI, thus tying his lineage to Austria and France. Napoleon's last word before he died was said to have been "Josephine." Still, as much as he had loved her he never respected her and never forgave her for the affair with Hippolyte Charles. Marie Louise should have sent Josephine into historical obscurity were it not for Napoleon's own downfall four years after their marriage. Nonetheless, she represented everything that Josephine was not: royal blood, a European lineage, and quiet modesty. And so at the end of her days Josephine was rather like a ghost, haunting the halls of Malmaison. But there were times, times of repose, when the still empress would shine like a golden bee in her majestic garden.

"Arcole"

Within forty-eight hours of his marriage to Josephine de Beauharnais, Napoleon left Paris for Italy. 1796 would see two major military victories for Napoleon first on May 10, the Battle of Lodi, and second on November 15, the Battle of the Bridge of Arcole. Both victories served to captivate and frighten the imaginations of those back in Paris. Moreover, these military triumphs would serve as the precursor to the ultimate glory for Bonaparte: emperor of France. There is no secret in the fact that Napoleon used art during his reign in France; however, as we will explore in this section art will shift the very appearance of Napoleon in order to make him more palatable to French tastes and aesthetics. The Corsican, colonial body of Napoleon – like that of Belley – will be altered to fit better with the idea of a French hero on ruler.

David had done his best in 1793 to wash away the red blistering sores from Marat's body. He displayed the fallen journalist in a posture resembling Christ in Michelangelo's *Pietà*. A lavish funeral service was arranged by David and Marat was interred under a large weeping willow at the *Club des Cordeliers*. Marat's heart had been removed from his body and hung from the ceiling at the *Club des Cordeliers* above the speakers podium to serve as a relic through which divine oratory inspiration might be drawn.⁸³ On November 25, 1793 Marat would be removed from his grave and reinterred at the Panthéon. Cults of Marat spontaneously emerged in France. As the country dechristianized busts of Marat began to replace crucifixes. If such could be done for a disfigured polarizing man with a hideous face and skin disease imagine what could be done for the man who saved France from the brink of collapse.

Representation of the battles of Lodi and Arcola can be said first to have emerged in the form of letters home before painting. Napoleon was certainly one for hyperbole: exaggerating losses in terms of the enemy and underplaying his own. "Bonaparte, quite literally, was constructing a narrative of their adventure in Italy, adventures he and his troops shared in common. His victories were amplified, the troops' morale was given a boost, and a bond between the commander-and-chief and his men was created in the process."⁸⁴ The *Moniteur* was a crucial aspect of circulating political propaganda in regards to the Italian campaigns. Indeed, throughout his reign, newspaper print would often be the foremost mode of control Napoleon would deploy upon his people. Weaving

⁸³ The heart would finally be embalmed and placed in a monument to the man.

⁸⁴ Dwyer, 254.

together military prowess with revolutionary rhetoric, Napoleon made himself into a mythic liberator. His mission now was to liberate Europe from its oppressive monarchs. “Most of the Italian cities looked upon their conqueror as a liberator – such was the magic of the word liberty, which resounded from the Alps to the Apennines.”⁸⁵ The war in Europe effectively ended on October 18, 1797 with the signing of the Treaty of Campo Formio. The Coalition had been defeated and Austria, represented by Count Philipp von Cobenzl, ceded control of part of the Netherlands, Greece, and Italy to France. A medal, designed by Benjamin Duvivier was commissioned to commemorate the event. On the one side we see Napoleon aged from his 1792 depiction by Greuze, yet, very similar to Gros’ 1801 depiction of the events at Arcole.⁸⁶ Indeed, Gros’ depiction of Napoleon may be seen to be the most accurate as he was the artist to spend the most time with Napoleon.

Dowdy in appearance one may regard Napoleon’s nose as one of the first features with which artistic liberty will be taken. Indeed, in cartoons of Napoleon in his imperial garb his nose is often grotesquely exaggerated. With regards to the Duvivier medal we see a triumphant hero followed by Minerva holding the newly claimed *Apollo Belvedere*. Seemingly too striking of a contrast is that between the idealized Greek male nude and the body of Napoleon. Thus, Napoleon is relegated to the front of the medal and an ambiguous “hero” is featured on the reverse. Still, already by 1796 Napoleon is obtaining the classical heraldry of a Caesar: the hero on the reverse of the Duvivier coin is haloed by laurels in the right hand of Minerva. Furthermore, Minerva is the goddess of

⁸⁵ de Bourrienne, 104.

⁸⁶ Another medal for the liberation of Lombardy was created in 1797 by the Italian artist Vassallo.

courage and heroic endeavors. Artistically I have already discussed the importance of the body of the *Apollo Belvedere* as it relates not only to conquest and masculinity but an aesthetic European ideal. Napoleon may be surging with the conquest of victory but he did not possess the ideal beauty of Apollo.

Arriving in Milan in 1796, Gros had been sent to Napoleon by Josephine. Edgar Munhall suggests that Gros' depiction of the general is more reflexive of a deeper psychological reflexion of the hero, "With its powerful *contraposto* this portrait suggests the complex character of the young general, rushing forward in violent action yet turning at the same time with an intense intellectual concentration."⁸⁷ Gros actively sought a commission from Napoleon. He courted Josephine in Genoa with the hopes that she would take him to Milan. Three years earlier in 1793 David had arranged for his pupil, who had not won the *Prix de Rome*, to have a passport and a place at the academy in Rome. When rioting occurred after students striking the *fleur-de-lis* from the school's coat of arms, Gros, Girodet, and others fled Rome.⁸⁸ Gros would spend the next three years eking out an existence as a miniaturist. It is certainly fair to speculate that Gros, like Gérard, saw the value in obtaining a prominent patron. Gérard at the end of the eighteenth century had Jean-Baptiste Isabey and Letizia Ramolino, Napoleon's mother, as patrons. It would seem as though the two former students of David were competing for the same subject. Gros would, in fact, be hired to paint Napoleon's portrait before the context had ever occurred.

⁸⁷ Edgar Munhall, "Portraits of Napoleon," *Yale French Studies*, No. 26, *The Myth of Napoleon* (1960), pp. 3-20. pp. 3-4.

⁸⁸ Gros to Genoa and Girodet to Naples.

Bonaparte at Arcole represents a moment where the career of both artist and subject depended completely on Josephine. On 5 October 1795 Napoleon had once again been in the right place at the right time once more. His career would be launched on the backs of a failed royalist uprising in Paris. Firing cannons directly into the mob as they approached the Church of Saint Roch, Napoleon's actions ended the fighting in mere moments. Dwyer writes of the incident:

As a reward for his role in suppressing the coup, Barras received a place in the newly formed Directory. Since he could not be a Director and head of the Army of the Interior at the same time, he handed in his resignation. He chose his second-in-command to replace him, probably because he thought Buonaparte was someone he could control. On 16 October, Buonaparte was promoted general of division. Ten days later, he was named commander-in-chief of the Army of the Interior. It was probably the most influential military position in the country, as the Army of the Interior was by far the largest in France. Overnight Buonaparte had become a figure to be reckoned with. And for what? For having fired, perhaps, a couple of cannon shot at a mob in front of a church? It is little wonder that he was known to the public as General Vendémiaire.⁸⁹

The obvious key to understanding the political situation is to acknowledge Paul Barras as the puppet-master behind Napoleon's early ascent. Josephine had been one of Barras' lovers but he was growing tired of her and her lavish spending. Napoleon had fallen madly in love with Josephine, going so far as to break off his engagement with Désirée Clary. Arcole, then, is dependent upon not only the success of *Vendémiaire* but the political desire of Barras. Napoleon gained a great deal that day, but as Dwyer so cynically suggests, the rapid promotion most likely was tied to other things. On March 2, 1796 he was appointed as commander-in-chief; March 9 marked his wedding to

⁸⁹ Dwyer 177.

Josephine; and on March 27 he greeted his new command in Italy. If we look to English caricature we find in James Gillray where Napoleon most likely was situated in early October of 1795.

Gros had successfully ingratiated himself with Josephine and won the appointment. He traveled to Milan in late 1796 and finished his portrait of Napoleon in two to three months. Timothy Wilson-Smith writes of the time:

Josephine found his work charming. She determined that this was the man who could picture her husband, soon to be the victor of Arcola [sic], as hero. There was one problem. Posing, so natural to her, was foreign to Bonaparte, so she had to come up with an ingenious solution. While over breakfast Bonaparte held the tricolour, Josephine held him. Lavallette, his aide-de-camp at three of these sessions, asserted that ‘Gros achieved an amazing likeness of Bonaparte as he was at the time’ [...] Bonaparte himself was pleased to have the portrait and pleased to have met its maker.⁹⁰

So much is reflected by this quote. Most importantly we are told that Gros’ painting captures what will become an elusive likeness of Napoleon. Furthermore, we see that this is achieved by exceptional access to the general which will lend authenticity to Gros’ later representations. Lastly, we have the extraordinary anecdote of Josephine holding Bonaparte still so that Gros can paint. When looking at the image I like to imagine her arms as his sash and her head resting where we see an elaborate knot. For painting a painting created while at the breakfast table, Gros’ portrait is able to capture the intensity and rapid action of the moment of Arcole. Cannons firing as men charge into the mouth of hell in order to cross naturally brings to mind Ponte Novu. At the same time, we think of Bonaparte firing into the monarchist mob in the streets of Paris. There was only one

⁹⁰ Timothy Wilson-Smith, *Napoleon and his Artists*, London: Constable, 1996. pp. 67-68.

means of victory and it involved crossing the heavily fortified bridge at Arcole. Staring down death and obtaining personal French glory is what Gros' painting is all about. For months the soldiers who Napoleon took command of, however the means, had not eaten well and had not been paid. Napoleon was able to inspire in them courage and self-sacrifice which made them into heroes and he himself into a legend.

Gros does not glamorize Napoleon's appearance in his painting. Indeed, the Louvre sketch is in many ways kinder to the overall appearance of Napoleon as it does not dwell on the sharpness of his nose and chin, the sunken quality of his eyes, nor the sickly sallow pallor of his skin. The finished product abandons traditional devices of portraiture and focuses on the flag, Napoleon's face, and the embroidery of his new General's uniform. Diminished in the extreme left of the painting is a small battle scene almost entirely consumed by smoke from cannon fire. Still, Napoleon himself was fond of the work and helped the impoverished Gros to have it engraved and widely circulated in France. David O'Brien writes that Gros in a letter to his mother, "modestly, and perhaps disingenuously, claimed that his portrait and one projected for Josephine were strictly private commissions, and that he was leaving the definitive painting of Bonaparte, 'to truly talented people to do for the public.'"⁹¹ But Gros had helped begin the visual propaganda machine that would become so integral to the Napoleonic myth. To be sure, Gros' contribution would prove extraordinarily valuable to the artist as he would be lavished with commissions and honors.

⁹¹ David O'Brien, *Antoine-Jean Gros, Painting and Propaganda Under Napoleon*, University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006. pp. 36.

Arcole would be a highlight of the First Italian Campaign of Napoleon. It would signal to Europe that the French were emerging from anarchy and that a tactical leader was at the head of the army.⁹² The victories in Italy, though, were victories against Austria. Arcole, which took place from 15 to 17 of November 1796 bled into the Battle of Rivoli on 13 January 1797. The iconography that Gros produced is reflexive of both battles in terms of Napoleonic propaganda. The portrait shows Napoleon in battle and winning and that is what matters. Napoleon's army reached Semmering Pass and was closing in on Vienna: the Habsburgs sought an armistice.⁹³ As a conqueror Napoleon sent a vast array of loot home. Wilson-Smith writes:

The first convoy of loot arrived at the end of 1796 and the second in the summer of 1797, but very quietly. The third did not come till the summer of 1798, just too late for the *Quatorze Juillet*. On this occasion its contents became a theme for public rejoicing at the feast of Liberty which marked the anniversary of the fall of Robespierre. For ten days crowds had trooped to the suburb of Charenton to marvel at the boxes of treasure that had been unloaded there. On the Ninth of Thermidor an immense cortège moved slowly from the quay beside the Jardin des Plantes to the Champ de Mars, where it paraded in front of the Directors, who were stationed near an altar dedicated to the fatherland. Four groups of chariots carried first the manuscripts and books, secondly the natural history display – rare minerals (including fossils from Verona), lions tigers, panthers, palm trees and carob trees – thirdly the Renaissance paintings and fourthly, bedecked with laurels, garlands of flowers and captured flags, the ancient statues.⁹⁴

Looted art as the result from conquest had not been new to French society, however.

Three years prior the government formed the *Commission Temporaire des Arts*, headed

⁹² Napoleon did not fight battles in the traditional manner that the nobility of other countries were use to. His battles were fought at any time whenever he saw the advantage.

⁹³ Englund 102.

⁹⁴ Wilson-Smith 70-71.

by Wicar at the time. The Belgian Campaign of 1794 had resulted in French acquisition of forty images by Rubens including his *Descent from the Cross*, several works by Van Dyck, an Michelangelo's *Madonna* from Bruges. When invading Italy, the Directory government sent word to Napoleon about art. Somewhat comically by today's standards the French were not certain as to what church Leonardo's *Last Supper* was in and Michelangelo had suffered greatly do to French Academic abuse; as Cecil Gould writes, "At the time of the Napoleonic wars the height of excellence in Italian painting meant Raphael, Correggio, Veronese and Titian – more of less in that order. The supremacy of Raphael was such as to amount to a cult."⁹⁵ Upon reaching Rome, as we have seen, the Vatican held the greatest treasures of antiquity: *Apollo Belvedere*, *Laocoön*, *Antinous*, and the *Belvedere Torso*. Still, in Pitti, Wicar sought works by non-Italians: "Important and famous works of Rubens, such as the *Four Philosophers* or the *Horrors of War*, one of the most admired of all Van Dyck's portraits – the *Cardinal Bentivoglio* – and Rembrandt, Van der Helst and Sustermans portraits. The Titian *Concert* and, more interestingly, the Bellini-esque *Three Ages of Man* [...] there was a predominance of northern pictures."⁹⁶ And it is the northern influence that is so important to us as we move forward looking at Napoleon. To be sure, Raphael will have a hugely significant role, but the northern influence and its impact on Ingres cannot be underestimated. Nor should the aesthetics of the north be disregarded when considering Napoleon as a unified body of his empire.

⁹⁵ Cecil Gould, *Trophy of Conquest*, London: Faber and Faber, 1965. pp. 50.

⁹⁶ Id. at 61-62.

Of course, the influx of art needed a place to be housed. What is now the Louvre saw its collection as ever expanding thanks to Napoleon. The museum had been opened to the public in 1793 but would need extensive repairs from years of neglect. Napoleon saw to this. Napoleon's military campaigns across Europe necessitated a grand museum to display the glory of his triumph. And though military victory was the means by which to collect Europe's treasures, the failed campaign of Egypt yielded an exotic collection of the antique. In 1803 the museum was renamed the Musée Napoleon in honor of its chief benefactor. Dominique Vivant Denon would be the first curator of the space, though this would not be his only or, at the time most significant role. Denon would be artistic advisor to the imperial court and the primary inventor of the Napoleonic relics. Not only was the Musée Napoleon a place meant to overawe the world; the Musée Napoleon captured the minds of artists in France. As money had eroded for the Academy to send students to Rome for their *Prix de Rome*, the Musée Napoleon almost begged the question if the trip was even necessary. Such was the case for an young artist named Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres.

“18 Brumaire, An VII”

Napoleon returned to Paris from Italy and was the man of the hour. He sought to advance himself further but knew, “the fruit was not yet ripe.”⁹⁷ While waiting, Napoleon would set his sights and military wits on the exotic east. In Egypt from July 1, 1798 until his departure on August 24, 1799, Napoleon kept the propaganda machine back in France

⁹⁷ Bourrienne IV pp. 336.

working at full speed. Having been elected in 1798 a member of the French Academy of Sciences, Napoleon took 167 scientists with him. These men would not only discover the Rosetta Stone but eventually would publish the *Description de l'Égypte*. The weakness of the French navy as well as plague had stifled Napoleon's ability to defeat the British and take Egypt. Making the most of the situation Bonaparte had one last victory before his return to France in the Battle of Aboukir. Murat had been instrumental in sewing disorder amongst the Ottoman troops to the point where, "The enemy threw themselves into the water in an attempt to reach the boats which were more than two miles out at sea; they all drowned, the most horrible sight that I have ever seen."⁹⁸ Napoleon would depart Egypt in secret leaving General Jean Baptiste Kléber in charge of a highly disgruntled and dwindling French army. After forty one days at sea, on October 8, 1799, Bonaparte set foot back on French soil in Fréjus and began his return to Paris.

Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, a former abbé and the author of *Qu'est-ce que le tiers-état?*, had been plotting a coup to overthrow the feeble Directory government. Aware of the need for a military man to be involved General Lazare Hoche had been the first choice in 1797, however, he died of tuberculosis that same year. The next choice was General Barthélemy Catherine Joubert. Joubert had achieved notable military advances under Napoleon and was most successful in Tyrol. When Napoleon departed for Egypt, Joubert took control of the force in Northern Italy, a most unsuccessful command, and, "showing a complete lack of political foresight, he got himself killed on 15 August 1799

⁹⁸ Napoleon, *Correspondance*, Vol. 5. pp. 541; as quoted in Paul Strathern, *Napoleon in Egypt*, New York: Bantam Books, 2009. pp. 394.

at the Battle of Novi.”⁹⁹ Thus, Sieyès, Roger Ducos, and Napoleon would take the place of the Directory government. The Neo-Jacobins posed the main threat. While reporting to the Directory government to account for himself – Napoleon had been charged with desertion – Napoleon’s physical appearance was noted, “Il a adopté les cheveux courts et sans poudre” and, moreover, “Il était glorieux et étrange; sa peau brûlée par le soleil et tannée par le vent de mer, son accent corse, les bizarreries de son accoutrement, ce cimenterre pendant à sa ceinture.”¹⁰⁰

The Directory parliament had been moved under guard from the Tuileries to the Château Saint-Cloud on November 10, 1799. That morning, Sieyès and Ducos resigned from the Council of Directors. Later in the afternoon, in a quiet garden at Saint-Cloud, Paul François Jean Nicole, vicomte de Barras, who had been instrumental in the rise of Napoleon, was persuaded to likewise resign. Barras’ persuasion was two pronged: guns aimed at his head and gold laid at his feet. The five Directors were now reduced to two – the Jacobins Louis-Jérôme Gohier and Jean-François-Augustine Moulin. The left was not happy with situation; a mood which only soured further when Gohier and Moulin were arrested. Seemingly undeterred, the two lower Councils continued meeting. “Decked out in their dramatic red togas, several score of neo-Jacobins representatives in both houses of the legislature overcame their internal divisions, their surprise, and their remorse, and found in extremist traces of the nobility and courage that had characterized so many of the ancient Roman senators whom they imitated in garb, language, and self-

⁹⁹ Dwyer, 469.

¹⁰⁰ Albert Vandal, *L’Avènement de Bonaparte Vol. I*, Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1908. pp. 249.

importance.”¹⁰¹ Cries of treason and motions to outlaw Napoleon were being made. The general, who in his youth had been more impetuous but with advantage of time and foreign experience, reverted to his former temper and petulance. Storming into the chamber armed and uninvited he did not help matters. He ranted about his own import, made accusations of treason and the ineffectiveness of the constitution, and had clearly bought into his own myth making by speaking of gods of war and victory. Senators encroached upon the little Corsican. The sight must have been at once terrifying and comic. A sea of red togaed Frenchmen – equally rubicund in the face from screaming oaths and invectives – about to descend upon puss in boots. To the relief of his supporters Napoleon was escorted from the chamber by his guard.

Lucien Bonaparte would save the debacle. Lucien was the President of the Council of Five Hundred and had, throughout the day, been dealing with the massive political fallout of his brother’s actions. Ten of Napoleon’s men went into the chamber at five in the evening to bring Lucien out. “Lucien, who did not seem to understand what he was asked to do, stood there dumbfounded [...] the officer the stood behind Lucien and, lifting him under the arms off the ground, placed him at the foot of the rostrum amid the tern grenadiers who then dragged him outside.”¹⁰² As a fog crept over the courtyard Lucien regained his senses and rallied the troops to his brother. He claimed that the English had bought a small minority in the Five Hundred and it was these men who were making the most noise. He called for an end of the corrupt French Directory and vowed

¹⁰¹ Englund, 162. David Bell refers to this moment, “members dressed in faintly ludicrous simulacra of Roman togas.” pp 221.

¹⁰² Dwyer, 501.

to thrust a dagger into his own brother's heart should Napoleon become a dictator. Murat and Leclerc entered the chamber and ordered the legislature to disband. Later in the evening Lucien realized that some sham of legality must be applied to the days actions and sent ushers out to look for loyal deputies. Less than one hundred men could be found – the constitution required two hundred for quorum – but the official number would be reported at 350. At two in the morning the three new consuls were brought to the floor to swear ambiguous oaths to the republic and an unwritten constitution. At thirty, Napoleon was now the most powerful man in France.

“Warrior to Bureaucrat”

Having secured political control in France, Napoleon set his sights on reclaiming the Italian territories which had been lost while he was in Egypt. Leading his men through the Great St. Bernard Pass, Napoleon engaged the Austrian army first at Montebello and then at the Battle of Marengo. French speed had won the day but only barely.

Nonetheless, the Napoleon propaganda machine spun the myth of battle which helped to solidify his power back in France. Gains from the battle were significantly larger than the Treaty of Campo Formio. The Treaty of Lunéville granted to France parts of Austria, Germany, the Rhine, and Tuscany. For a second time Napoleon had taken Italy and now had defeated the Holy Roman Empire.

Painted originally for Carlos IV of Spain, David's 1801 rendering of *Bonaparte Crossing the Alps at Saint-Bernard* propels the Napoleon myth ever forward. The mule which Napoleon actually made the cross on is replaced by a rearing white horse.

Classical drapery engulfs Bonaparte and takes on a solid quality which is reflected in the rocky alps. The horses eye and mouth emote terror. Whereas, Napoleon is stoic and serene. His hand in a gesture somewhere between David's nationalist *Horatii* and the supreme reason of *Socrates*. David favors Napoleon's left profile. Napoleon's hair is a swept by the wind but not as extreme as we saw in Gros' portrait *Arcole*. David shows Napoleon's face as more round than angular and, now, paler. Unlike Gros there is a wider shot to David's visual composition. He is building from the traditional aspects of portraiture: the names on the rocks of past men who have conquered via the Alps, the cannon in the background to remind of of Napoleon's own origins in the French army, and the billowing tricolor flag of France following the countless blades of bayonets each representing a soldier under the command of Napoleon. Indeed, the heroic nature of Napoleon is reflected in his size – he is on equal scale with his horse. Dorothy Johnson points out that the background of David's work is in reality; whereas, Napoleon rides into history.¹⁰³ Crossing the Alps as Karolus Magnus had is significant for establishing a historical lineage. Charlemagne was the first emperor since the fall of the Roman Empire. Indeed, a map of Charlemagne's empire is not dissimilar from Napoleon's French empire. Furthermore, Charlemagne represents a a unification of German and French: Napoleon of Italian and French.

David was flummoxed at the refusal of his subject to sit for a portrait. Warren Roberts writes quoting David and Napoleon:

¹⁰³ Dorothy Johnson, "David and Napoleonic Painting," in *Jacques-Louis David: New Perspectives*, ed. Dorothy Johnson, Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2006. pp. 135.

‘Pose?’ asked Bonaparte, who had already made it clear to David that he did not like to pose. He explained to the artist that it served no purpose and that the great men of antiquity had not posed.

–But I paint you for your century, for men who have seen you, who know you; they will want to recognize your likeness.

–Likeness? It is not the exactness of traits, a wart on the nose, that makes a likeness. It is the character of the countenance, what animates a person that is necessary to portray.

–One does not preclude the other.

–Certainly Alexander never posed for Apelles. No one knows if portraits of great men are likenesses. It suffices that their genius lives.¹⁰⁴

Notwithstanding the artist’s misgivings about portraying Napoleon without a sitting, David appears to have opted to endow Napoleon at last with the immortal youth reflected in the *Apollo Belvedere* which the First Consul had captured on his first expedition in Italy. The refusal of sitting for artists was now becoming a trend. We see at once how the Napoleonic visual regime, while strongly regulated, was not about accuracy, as Napoleon himself said to David, but rather about capturing the zeitgeist of the man and his movement. Recognizing, perhaps, the expanding empire and the influence of the north David seems to have borrowed from Étienne Maurice Falconet, another student of Boucher. Napoleon’s horse in *Bonaparte Crossing the Alps at Saint-Bernard* has a strong visual and allegorical comparison to Falconet’s *The Bronze Horseman*. Catherine the Great had no rightful claim to the throne of Russia and wanted to visually align herself with Peter the Great; thus, the commission. David had been a shrewd political

¹⁰⁴ Warren Roberts, *Jacques-Louis David, Revolutionary Artist: Art, Politics, and the French Revolution*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989. pp. 144.

prognosticator in the past, and it could well be that he was up to some of his former visual tricks in 1801.

The true contrast to David's figure are the five portraits of Napoleon as First Consul. All three co-Consuls – Napoleon, Lebrun, and Cambacérès – wore red velvet coats with gold and silver embroidery in addition to “gold palmettes, and tight-fitting trousers embroidered in gold.”¹⁰⁵ Napoleon would commission Gros to paint the first version of himself in his uniform of state. Gros was to make two copies one of which would go to the Second Consul, Cambacérès.¹⁰⁶ Marie-Guillèmine Benoît, Robert Lefèvre, Joseph-Marie Vien fils, Charles Meyneir, Fortuné Dufau, Jean-Baptiste Greuze, and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres would also be given commission to paint Napoleon as First Consul.¹⁰⁷ Let us limit our discussion here to Gros' portrait and Ingres' 1804 portrait *Bonaparte, First Consul*. In Ingres' image Napoleon is shown in Liège and we can see the Cathédrale Saint-Lambert through parted drapes. Showing a cathedral is particularly important as it is reflexive of the signing of the Concordat of 1801 by Napoleon and Pope Pius VII restoring not only Catholicism in France but christianity. De Bourrienne writes, “The Concordat had reconciled him with the Court of Rome; the numerous erasures from the emigrant list gathered round him a large body of the old

¹⁰⁵ le Bourhis 83-84.

¹⁰⁶ O'Brien 84. Additionally Napoleon would have Gros send three additional copies to Rouen, Lille, and Lyon.

¹⁰⁷ See Edward Lilley, “Consular Portraits of Napoleon Bonaparte,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 6e période, 106 (1985), pp. 143-56. See also *ibid.*

nobility; and the Legion of Honor, though at first but badly received, soon became a general object of ambition. Peace, too, had lent her aid.”¹⁰⁸

The city of Liège had been nearly destroyed by Austrian forces in 1794; particularly the district known as the faubourg d’Amercoeur. Napoleon had gifted the city 300,000 francs as part of his larger civic works project throughout France designed to make the country into the greatest in the world. During his time in Liège he stayed on the Mont-Saint-Martin and this is where we find him. Rich velvets which both adorn Napoleon’s body (in red) and the table and chair (in green) seem to hold more fascination for Ingres than the subject himself. Indeed, the gold tasseled tablecloth with its interweaving patterns of stars and flowers, the delicate gold embroidery which loops in and out of Napoleon’s coat gives way to reveal a silk lining which is reflected in the silk stockings covering the First Consul’s legs, even the lace ruff circumnavigating the wrists somehow draws our eye deeper into the portrait more than the face of the man. Even the tails of Napoleon’s coat rumple and “sit” upon the throne like chair in front of the window. The severely raked floor places Napoleon on a stage of sorts, but this time in a new role. Steven Englund evokes Christopher Durang’s existential play *An Actor’s Nightmare* when describing Napoleon’s role on 19 Brumaire.¹⁰⁹ Now the Corsican-cum-general-cum-First Consul finds himself in the role of bureaucrat.

Much as was the case with *Belley*, Napoleon’s face seems somewhat removed from his body. Ingres has constructed a prefabricated, aristocratic Frenchman for the head

¹⁰⁸ De Bourrienne Vol. II 133.

¹⁰⁹ Englund 163.

of Napoleon to inhabit. We know from Napoleon's communication with David that the First Consul was not altogether concerned with accuracy in rendering; however, given Ingres' panache for stylized painting the artistic liberty may have been exactly what Napoleon wanted. Though Ingres based his study largely on Gros' 1802 work of the same name – as well as a very brief encounter – we see the same filmic approach that David took in regards to the facial features. Though Gros uses his *Arcole* as the basis for his facial features, the focus is panned out, taking in the whole of the body as well as the surroundings (which may in fact appear more interesting: cannons and curtains). The quality in the mouth and jaw are the same as Gros; however, a more generalized, aesthetic, and French Napoleon appears to emerge at this time and one must think that this is tied to the success of David's dual portrait exhibition of his *Napoleons* (*St. Bernard Pass* and an unfinished sketch) bookending his *Intervention of the Sabine Women*. Indeed, even sculpture has begun to reflect these classical – and we should say aesthetically Davidian – qualities of Napoleon as can be seen in Canova's 1802 bust. The pre-made body of the bureaucrat allows the heroic body of Napoleon to instantly displace itself and begin the work of fixing the ailing state. Within three years Napoleon's horse becomes civic papers and his sword cemented in its sheath. His hand recoils into his jacket as to avoid the temptation of former duty. Moreover, the empire which can be surveyed from the parted curtains is a French one. In David's rendering of the crossing at St. Bernard Pass, "Bonaparte" has been etched into stone more gracefully and deeper than those in history who came before. A sense of permanence is held by this branding: French permanence as echoed by the tricolor in the bottom left. Moreover, Napoleon's

family name has acquired a new spelling, a French spelling. In spite of his early rebellion Napoleon is now thoroughly French.

Gros' work shows Napoleon gesturing to a top document that lists the coup d'état of Brumaire, the Comices of Lyon, and the Concordant: all non-military but bureaucratic achievements. However, beneath this we see military plans for battles. In contrast, Ingres only shows the decree of 1803 for the rebuilding of Faubourg d'Amercoeur. Thus, in Gros we see a layering of the bureaucrat and the warrior and in Ingres only the bureaucrat. The one feature which Gros will maximize and not Ingres is the gloves. David showed Napoleon with one hand gloved and the other not. In Gros we see the First Consul clutching both gloves in his left hand. In Gros' 1803 *Bonaparte Distributing a Sword of Honor After the Battle of Marengo* we see the gloves again, but this time worn by Napoleon. Gloves, of course, will come into such dramatic play in Gros' 1804 *Bonaparte Visiting the Plague Victims of Jaffa*, where the general un-gloves his left hand and in a Christ-like gesture touches the open wound of a plague victim. For Ingres the healing hand or the military hand of Napoleon is tucked firmly into his coat. Furthermore, Gros' portrait walks the balance between the military Napoleon and the bureaucrat. Ingres shows Napoleon in velvet breeches, Gros in soldiers trousers. Gros places Napoleon in boots, Ingres in silk stockings and sliper like shoes. Lastly, Ingres does not place the military regalia-esque sash of First Consul around Napoleon.

For me the contrast means to understand these two works resides in the very floor in which the representations of Napoleon stand. Ingres' floor is thick carpeting. The kind that your feet sink into. It is broken up by another, bolder carpet and large symbol in the

right corner. Gros places his Napoleon on a hard, cold, cracked, uneven stone floor.

Gros' painting is the first and has the immediacy of being closer to the time of Napoleon's appointment. Furthermore, Gros already has the relationship with Napoleon from the battlefield. It is not surprising that the artist moves to paint the First Consul with a military tinge. Nonetheless, we look to Ingres to see what the more polite role of First Consul must be for French society post-revolution. He is a rebuilders of churches – or the Church – and must present himself as public servant and politician. We must remember the scene of Napoleon's impatience when storming down the isles of the last meeting of the Directory. A military presence in the government nearly upset his plans. Ingres understands the roll of evolving representation of Napoleon. Moreover, Ingres corrects what he sees as flaws. Gros is reliant upon his militant portrait for the facial composition of Napoleon and this is what Ingres rejects. Napoleon's hair is cropped closer and his skin is whiter: he is more French.

Furthermore, Ingres' portrait represents the first time where we can truly see the influence from the Musée Napoleon within artistic style. Ingres hedges a bit by relying on the gothic architecture of the cathedral to introduce the stylistic shift, but I would argue that even in Napoleon's silk stockings we can see the influence of color and texture coming from northern artist like Anthony van Dyck. Raking the floor at such an extreme angle and how Ingres has arranged the visual space is also typical of this style. Most importantly, though, is the coloration of Napoleon's skin. The First Consul grows paler and paler as he move toward becoming emperor. It is clear that he has been accepted and, one might say, acculturated as French. Now he begins to shift. The difference lies in the

contrast between *Arcole* and *St. Bernard Pass*. *Arcole* was merely on Italian soil and was to defeat Austria; *St. Bernard Pass* defeated Italy and brought the Catholic church to heel. David transitions Napoleon away from Gros' coloring and even his own of a few years prior. Ingres' portrait is merely the next logical step in a game of skin correction. Though, as we saw with Josephine, there is yet a final step.

“Chryselephantine”

Seated in majesty his ivory hand grasping at the symbolic staff of authority he stares out at the viewer. His left foot juts out to greet us as we approach. Resting upon his head are the laurels of the victor. Ivory and gold intermingle and dance across the visual field. An intricately patterned gown folds and cascades around his waist and to his ankles. There is so much power and awe invested into the figure that it command assent. Should we bow before this image? Would his cold skin and eyes come to life if we did not? These are, no doubt, the intended sentiments that Phidias intended the viewer to feel when looking up his sculpture of Zeus. What is remarkable, of course, is that the same descriptors could be easily applied to Ingres' *Napoleon I on his Imperial Throne*. Having thus far examined the historical rise of Napoleon, his integration into French society and marriage, and his early military successes we now come to the final step in his rise to power. In this last section we will find Napoleon to emerge, through representation, as the unifier of the empire which we have watched him construct. This is achieved by now presenting him as a pan-European figure who transcends history all the way back to the rocks David placed on *St. Bernard Pass*.

May 12, 1802 saw the day when Napoleon was declared First Consul for life by the Tribunat. A vote of the general public resulted in 3,653,600 in favor and 8,272 against. And, thus on August 2 (Thermidor 14), 1802 (An X) the measure carried.¹¹⁰ As we have seen, though, with every new increase of power Napoleon craved still more. In little time Napoleon's hand selected Senate decided that France again needed a hereditary ruler. On May 18, 1804 the title of emperor was officially bestowed upon the man who ten years prior had failed to rise to power on the small island of Corsica. De Bourrienne writes, "Bonaparte had a long time before spoken to me of the title of Emperor as being the most appropriate for the new sovereignty which he wished to found in France. This, he observed, was not restoring the old system entirely, and he dwelt much on its being the title which Caesar had born."¹¹¹ The feeling within the Senate must have been extraordinary as for the first time in a decade words like "Sire" and "Majesty" were being applied to an individual in France.

There would be many paintings commissioned by all of the leading artists of the day to record for history and public display the momentous event. Yet the most lavish of them all came with unknown commission again from Ingres.¹¹² *Napoleon I on his Imperial Throne* gave the French the only seated depiction of their new emperor. Chilled austerity and awe exude from the portrait. Laser like precision focuses in on the details of the coronation regalia. We feel as though the brush of the ermine would be soft

¹¹⁰ Englund 218.

¹¹¹ De Bourrienne II 262.

¹¹² Georges Vigne, Ingres, New York: Abbeville Press, 1995. On page 56 Vigne gives indication that there must have been a commission due to a *modello*. Still, the painting was not purchased until displayed at the Salon in August of 1806.

to our hands. The velvet would crumple in our fist. The chain of the Legion of Honor gives weight to this ætherial figure. Encapsulated in enormous robes of state and holding the hand of justice in his left hand and the scepter of Charles V in his right, a golden wreath of victory is upon his head, and the sword of Charlemagne rests at his side. A spreading golden eagle framed by signs of the zodiac as well as a Madonna and Child lifts the pillow from where a tiny foot just from beneath the robes ready for genuflection. Silks and satins and velvet and gold swirl in a chaotic dance around the body. Two majestic gold columns rise from the floor where the emperor may rest his head. The laurel diadem radiates outward in small beams and then again is incircled by gold. Within all of this materiality two large marble orbs hover atop the great golden pillars. As we look on and into this painting we begin to be struck at how much Napoleon's own head resembles one of these ivory spheres. Is he the ruler of a globe or is he the sun which planets revolve around? Perhaps one is the sun and one the moon, cooled in the stoicism of Napoleon and orbiting around a new center of the universe.

Susan Siegfried has done a great deal of research carefully examining all of the iconography in Ingres' portrait of Napoleon. In her own book *Ingres: Painting Reimagined* as well as her collaboration with Todd Poterfield *Staging Empire: Napoleon, Ingres, and David* we find painstaking research that dissects every inch of canvas to explain to the viewer all of the symbolism shown in Ingres' work. Siegfried, though, misses an entire wealth of reflection with regards to Napoleon as she writes, "Ingres's overvaluing of objects is made abundantly clear through his sacrifice of the body to the wondrous surface appearance of things. This choice flew in the face of the

dominant neoclassical aesthetic of the beautiful male body (which Ingres had already impressively mastered), and while the standard was maintained in theory and in practice during the period, it was proving unreliable as a political language.”¹¹³ Napoleon, as shown by Ingres, is acculturation. All of the gilding and placement of sacred iconography around the body of Napoleon does not give him authority; instead, he absorbs them into his being to become more homogeneously European. The glories Napoleon must embody come from the low countries, Germany, Italy, Austria, and Denmark; not just France. Furthermore, a new aesthetic regime was blossoming in France as we saw with the constant influx of art as the result of Napoleon’s victories. Ingres, who had won the *Prix de Rome* but was unable to go, surely found solace in the fact that most of the pieces his colleagues had study during their time were now in Paris. Moreover, those pieces were now in visual dialogue with works from all over Europe. And this is the finishing art education which Ingres receives. We need only to look to the works of Anthony van Dyck to see the same obsessive fetishizing of fabrics which will forever possess Ingres’ paintings. The influence of the North cannot be underplayed in relation to *Napoleon*.

Napoleon’s desire to link himself to Charlemagne cannot be underplayed. Using golden olive and laurel branches as a crown is not dissimilar to the image Charlemagne distributed of himself on coin. And Charlemagne is equally as important as the idea of emperor. Indeed, Charlemagne’s title is what gives legitimacy to Napoleon: a French

¹¹³ Susan Siegfried, “Ingres’s Napoleon I on His Imperial Throne,” *Staging Empire: Napoleon, Ingres, and David*, University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006. pp. 38.

ruler has been emperor before. Moreover, Charlemagne exerted protection over the papacy which led to control and his crowning as Roman emperor: there is an obvious parallel within Napoleon's coronation and control over the pope. These elements are vital but are not singular. An under-analyzed element to Ingres' portrait is the staff of Charles V. Crucial to the living memory of France is that Charles V built the Bastille.

Furthermore, he built the Louvre which, as I have said, was at this time known as the Musée Napoleon. This link gains significance because of Denon's design of the relics and his relationship to the museum. Most importantly, though, is that Charles V married Joan of Bourbon. Holding a staff which features him shows the adoption of the Bourbon iconography into ceremony as well. Moreover, with regard to seated figures, in 1668 Henri Testelin produced a portrait of a seated Louis XIV holding the same staff, in the same hand and also placing his foot in a posture to receive genuflection.

In terms of the north Ingres' *Napoleon* has clearly absorbed Jan van Eyck's *God the Father* from the Ghent Altarpiece. The Concordat had permitted religion to reenter statehood in France and also allowed for Napoleon to crown himself at the coronation while the Pope sat idly by. The figure which Ingres provides is not that of a man. It is a man made of things of material. A collection of grandness which recalls Prospero from Act IV, Scene I of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, "We are such stuff / As dreams are made on." Robespierre had wanted a Supreme Being for France and now, ten years after his execution, there was one. In terms of Ingres own oeuvre one cannot miss the parallel between 1811's *Jupiter and Thetis* and *Napoleon I on his Imperial Throne*. Immortality and and supreme authority appear to have been heavy weights upon Ingres' mind in the

early 1800s. Much as in the van Eyck and *Napoleon* a supreme being stars blankly out at the viewer, blithely unaware of any import but his own. Indeed, Thetis, the nymph, is quite ignored by Jupiter. One cannot ignore the same position between the Roman god and Napoleon, though, in terms of arm placement, the left foot, and the presence of an eagle. If we recall the twice life sized sculpture by Canova, which Napoleon did not care for and now resides ironically at Apsley House, and the preliminary sketches by David we know that the neoclassical model is to consider the body as a nude and then dress it. In terms of Jupiter the body is quite clearly present. With regard to Ingres's *Napoleon*, however, one feels as though removing the imperial regalia would result in only finding air beneath it. But of course, with regard to Jupiter, Napoleon is also Phidias' *Zeus*. Remarkably, it is Zeus's ivory skin which overwhelms the christian god in terms of visual formation in Ingres.

The face of the emperor himself may well be brought into question. To be sure, the effort to create new levels of traditional garb was certainly well thought through. Nonetheless Ingres had never really had a proper sitting with Napoleon before, during, or after the coronation. Thus, when it came time to make the face of an emperor, rather than draw from the work of Gros' from two years earlier, Ingres decided to go with a face with which he was intimately familiar: his own. In his *Self Portrait* from 1804 and perhaps even more so in his sketch from 1811 the face of the enthroned emperor is incredibly evident. And this, perhaps is fitting. Both men were not regarded as very good looking. Both had enormous ambition from a young age. So when it came time to create a likeness

of a man who did not seem to care about what his portraits looked like why not place your own face under the crown of an empire?

Napoleon's skin is what leaves the viewer lingering, though. Napoleon's face is the only spot where flesh is exposed. But this flesh lies somewhere between human and ivory. Ingres' play between the two spheres and Napoleon's face is uncanny. Moreover, there is the ivory hand of Charlemagne atop the scepter of justice. It too matches the sphere's and Napoleon's pallor. A lace ruff around the emperor's neck bids us to examine his wrists and then his hands. At first glance we see that there is something wrong with Napoleon's hands. When we look closer and deeper we realize it is because he is wearing silk gloves embroidered with gold. The effect is that of garish stitching binding the man of ivory and gold together. *Napoleon*, like *Zeus* is chryselephantine: a body made mostly of ivory and adorned with gold. Ingres' work is to make him appear the same as Phidias did with *Zeus*. Epic in scale, *Zeus* is thirty-nine feet tall, Napoleon might as well be too. Ingres' representation is meant to show us a deity on earth: a great emperor of a pan-European empire.

Returning, then, to the art of Andrea Appiani we find not only the eventual unification of a Napoleonic Empire aesthetic by way of Ingres but also conformation of the need for Napoleon to unify the presentation of his body within his own empire. Appiani was appointed as court painter in Italy in 1805. His first major work post-coronation was an imperial portrait of Napoleon. Like Ingres there is a great deal of artistic license within the portrait. Napoleon's robes, as rendered by Appiani, look nothing like the official robes of state for the Italian coronation. Instead, the floral pattern

very closely resembles the chair in Ingre's portrait *Napoleon as First Consul*. Moreover, the Iron Crown of Lombardy is nowhere to be seen; nor is the crown pictured that of Charlemagne. Coins in the fashion of ancient caesars were minted which did display Napoleon wearing the Iron Crown, but the amount of artistic variance from actuality is striking. We can safely assume that Appiani, like all artist except Gros, had little to no face time with Napoleon. Clearly he is reliant upon other artists' works to render his representations. As a final note with regard to the coronation picture, however, we see in Appiani the opposite of what we saw in Ingres. Whereas in Ingres there was the desire to unite the northern quality of the empire with the southern, Appiani seems determined to emphasize the Mediterranean quality of Napoleon's skin. To me the purpose of the double coronation was not to exert further dominance over Rome – surely this had been achieved by the Concordat. Instead, Napoleon's choice to have two coronations allowed for him to assert supremacy over both powers that had laid claim to Corsica. His failure in the short-term had now been eclipsed by his star.

There are two further works in which the lasting influence of Ingres upon Appiani shows through. *The Allegory of the Peace of Pressburg* shows the moment when Austria signed a Peace accorded with France in 1805. Austrian holdings in Italy and Bavaria were ceded to France as part of the peace negotiations as well as effectively ending the Holy Roman Empire. Within Appiani's image is displacement of Ingres' *Napoleon I on his Imperial Throne*. Minerva brings Napoleon the world, which he is presumed to be able to conquer, as the Emperor embraces Peace who stares upon him in awe. Minerva, as we have seen before, is often associated with Napoleonic victory. When Girodet painted his

version of *Ossian* for Malmaison, Minerva led the glorious French troops into Valhalla. Again, with regards to *Ossian*, we anecdotally have the adoption of a very northern theme by Napoleon into his empire; yet, as he campaigned he was known to read James Macpherson's epic poem to his troops in Italian. The last image by Appiani which we should consider is *The Triumph of Jupiter-Napoleon, Dominating the World*. Here again we have the use of the Ingres' *Napoleon*. Moreover, Appiani blatantly combines Napoleon with Jupiter. Boime writes of the image that it is, "the most elaborate [...] done for the vault of the emperor's throne room [...] An awesome image of baroque pomp, it conflates Flaxman's engravings and the hieratic portrait of Napoleon by Ingres."¹¹⁴ The role of Flaxman is of particular note as the artist was inspired and overawed by Phidias' *Zeus*.¹¹⁵ Ingres' throne and throne room appear to be deconstructed in this work by Appiani. The radiant halo which once belonged to the backing of the throne now spirals into the sky. Signs from the Zodiac that once occupied the floor are now a banner overhead – Leo (birthday), Virgo (commission into the army), Libra (Treaty of Campo Formio), Scorpio (Coup Brumaire), and Sagittarius (Coronation) – telling, in order, the life story of Napoleon.¹¹⁶ His left hand holds the staff of Zeus while his right is placed atop the world. And, like Zeus, his bare torso is shown, molding him into the heroic nude of antiquity.

¹¹⁴ Boime, *Art in the Age of Bonapartism 1800-1815*, 647.

¹¹⁵ Alison West, *From Pigalle to Pr  ault: Neoclassicism and the Sublime in French Sculpture, 1760-1840*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. pp. 163.

¹¹⁶ My translation of the zodiac is different from Boime's; however, Boime's dates do not actually align with the zodiac. Furthermore, he believe that Libra is merely meant to indicate justice. See Op. cit. at 648.

Napoleon, then, becomes a form of visual representation which shifts the man away from reality and into the presentation of the majesty he creates, as he wanted and as he instructed David. All that surrounds him in Ingres' portrait is the new French Empire which he likewise embodies. Relics and ornamentation do not empower him nor do they give him the vestige of empire; instead, it is he who empowers the object for it is Napoleon who created the empire for the symbol to exist. *Belley* share the commonality of likeness being of the man being less important than the idea, however, *Belley* is dependent upon the painterly drawing together of elements from which power and stature arose because *Belley* is consumed by the empire rather than being the empire. The two formally colonial bodies are separated from their initial identities and present anew. A binary of skin, of *noir* and *blanc*, unite the two men as does history. They are allowed, through their given circumstances, to emerge as figures that surpass visual inhibitors. Instead, the image of the man who went from slave to *muscadin* is what is essential: that is the narrative of the portrait. In the case of Napoleon his true likeness is eroded away as his stature grows. Beginning with *St. Bernard Pass* his portrait must not only inspire and command but reflect the pan-European empire he is creating. *Belley* as he is shown by Girodet stands as an allegory of abolition and the end of a race-class structure in the French colonies. The chryselephantine Napoleon of Ingres takes the places of the long lost *Statue of Zeus*. Both men broke the bondage of occupation and seized control of their lives in a remarkable fashion that necessitated art to produce something new in order to represent them. Narratively their stories sometimes are almost indistinguishable. For us, as viewers, they represent the perfected.

Blanc, in full, is under revision and being prepared for submission for publication.

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